



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

3 3433 07602342 7



Nov 20 1900

1





1345

Hope

WB





A NEW GODIVA.



# A NEW GODIVA.

BY

STANLEY HOPE,

AUTHOR OF "GEOFFREY'S WIFE."

---

"And built herself an everlasting name."—TENNYSON.

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.  
1876.



- 26990 -

# CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A Stormy Night . . . . .	7
II. At the Little Inn . . . . .	12
III. Katie . . . . .	21
IV. A Narrow Escape . . . . .	28
V. Up at the Great House . . . . .	35
VI. A New Life . . . . .	41
VII. An Evening at Rutland Gate . . . . .	50
VIII. Across Country . . . . .	57
IX. Down the Lanes . . . . .	65
X. Six Years . . . . .	74
XI. Midnight Colloquies . . . . .	78
XII. On the Terrace . . . . .	91
XIII. Evil Tidings . . . . .	99
XIV. Two Pairs of Lovers . . . . .	110
XV. Ruin . . . . .	116
XVI. Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square . . . . .	122
XVII. Broken Down . . . . .	129
XVIII. Mr. Hume . . . . .	138
XIX. Temptation . . . . .	147
XX. A Woman's Sacrifice . . . . .	154
XXI. Sunshine on the Sea . . . . .	157
XXII. Storm and Darkness . . . . .	161
XXIII. Snatched from Death . . . . .	166
XXIV. A Visitor at the Cottage . . . . .	172
XXV. At Lincoln's Inn . . . . .	179
XXVI. New Hopes . . . . .	185

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVII. Jim . . . . .	189
XXVIII. Godiva . . . . .	194
XXIX. Bulfinch Triumphant . . . . .	199
XXX. At the Club . . . . .	205
XXXI. The Picture of the Year . . . . .	208
XXXII. "You Lie" . . . . .	214
XXXIII. The Villa at Chiswick . . . . .	220
XXXIV. Husband and Wife . . . . .	227
XXXV. Val Poingdestre . . . . .	232
XXXVI. Val's Wife . . . . .	237
XXXVII. A Midnight Encounter . . . . .	245
XXXVIII. Perils of the Sea . . . . .	252
XXXIX. The Raft . . . . .	258
XL. Nathaniel J. Higginbottom . . . . .	263
XLI. A Glimpse of Home . . . . .	271
XLII. The Reef . . . . .	279
XLIII. Arthur Deverell, Junior . . . . .	286
XLIV. Revelations . . . . .	293
XLV. A Strange Meeting . . . . .	301
XLVI. Through the Bush . . . . .	310
XLVII. The Log House . . . . .	314
XLVIII. Hope Revived . . . . .	320
XLIX. Mr. Bulfinch in Trouble . . . . .	327
L. Risen from the Dead . . . . .	336

# A NEW GODIVA.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### A STORMY NIGHT.

IT was not altogether a night for a woman to be making her way along a dark Devonshire lane. The rain was coming down in floods; the darkness was so intense that, like the Egyptian plague of old, it might almost be felt; the wind, coming off the sea, where it was playing sad havoc with the hapless ships, was doing its best to uproot the tall elms which bordered the narrow roadway, and caused such an uproar among the struggling branches that many of them yielded the point at once, and preferred parting company bodily with the parent stem to holding out longer in so hopeless a contest with the storm.

In the pauses of the wind which swept in gusts through the valley, the low roar of the sea could be heard stealing up the lane, denoting the proximity of the coast. Now and again an odor of sea-weed mingled with the faint smell of the rain. Had there been any light to speak of, patches of white scud which had scaled the cliffs and sailed away inland on the breast of the gale might have been seen,—a sure token of the fury of the wind, which had churned the salt spray into a yellow yeast, and choked therewith all the nooks and crannies of the rocks, which stood like bastions to resist the huge sea-waves.

Taking advantage of a lull, the woman paused at an angle



of the road where it branched off more inland. She was of middle age, plainly clad, and belonged evidently to the class of hardy peasants who inhabit the rural districts of South Devon. Her clothes were streaming with wet, her bonnet was almost torn from her head, and her cloak, even in the comparative lull, swayed about significantly, as if it meditated following the example of the vanquished branches and yielding itself up to the resistless wind.

"The Lord be praised! there be the linhay. Another quarter-mile and I shall be there," she exclaimed, as the little erection in question loomed up through the darkness by the roadside. "Not all the masters in England should have made me turn out such a night as this if I'd a knowed what I had to put up with. But, poor young man, he be awful bad, sure enough. There's one thing, he's a gentleman every inch of him, and it's a pleasure doing anything for the likes o' him."

She passed on again down the lane until she reached a gate where a narrow road, with wheel-tracks a foot deep, led through a sort of corpse. Here the trees arched so thickly above that she was fain to grope with her hand along the bushes which grew on either side. In spite of every precaution, the roughness of the road caused her to stumble and almost fall at every few yards, and sundry ejaculations of a character not complimentary to the pathway broke angrily from her lips.

"Thank the Lord! there's a gleam at last," she exclaimed, as, at a turn of the road, a light from a cottage window streamed out upon the darkness. "Jim Price will be a'most mazed to see me here this time o' night, for 'tis a main lonely spot, sure enough."

The cottage appeared to be the abode of a gamekeeper, as it stood in a little clearing, with the wood within a few yards on every side. It was evidently in the depths of a valley, for the storm, which might still be heard roaring at a distance,

seemed to pass far overhead, and left this little nook in the woods in comparative repose. The rain, too, had now ceased, and, giving her garments a shake, to get rid of some of the superfluous moisture, the woman moved towards the door and rapped loudly with her knuckles.

There was an exclamation of surprise from within in response to the knock, and then the short snapping bark of a couple of small dogs, who rushed angrily to the door and sniffed suspiciously at the foot of it. The deep tones of a man's voice, however, soon silenced their yelps, and then the same voice demanded who was there.

"It's me, Betty Morcombe. Open the door, God bless you. I be dripping with wet, and as tired as a dog, for I've come all the way from the 'Hare and Hounds' in the pouring rain."

At the sound of her voice the door was quickly thrown open, and the form of a tall, broad-shouldered man appeared in the doorway.

On seeing Betty he drew her within the cottage, and then stood staring at her in amazement.

"Betty! why what ever brings yew here such a night as this?" he exclaimed.

"Let me sit down first, and I'll tell 'ee all about it," the woman answered, as she passed into the common sitting-room of the cottage and took a seat on the old wooden settle by the fire.

"A drap of warm cider be the best thing for yew," said the man, as he took from a shelf a small pointed saucepan of the pattern so much in vogue among the peasantry of the west.

Betty raised no objection, and her host proceeded to fill the saucepan from the contents of a jug which stood upon the large wooden table in the centre of the room. Inserting the pointed extremity of the utensil deep down among the

coals, he left it for the cider to warm, and turned again with an inquiring glance to his visitor.

"Now, then, Betty, what's up?"

"First of all, how's the missus?" questioned Betty in reply.

"Oh, *she's* right enough. Getting on as well as need be. She's only fretting."

"And the babby?"

"As bad as bad can be. Her's a bin but a poor little toad from the day her was born, and though it'll be hard for the missus, the sooner her's took the better, say I. Not but what I love the little toad myself, but missus will fret her heart out if so be the cheild pines away day after day like her's a bin doing for the last two weeks. But now, then, what's your business? What brings yew here this time o' night?"

"A queer business enough. There's a young gent a-dying at our house; I don't believe he'll live the night out. He's sent word to say he must see yew to-night. I believe he knows he ain't long for this world, and he would have somebody set off to fetch yew to once."

"To fetch me? what ever does he want me for?"

"That's best known to himself. He said nought to the master about that. We don't even know who he is, or where he comes from. Tom was sent off on the pony to fetch the doctor,—a brave ride he'll have, too,—Peter was up to the house, and there was nobody but me to come for yew."

"Yew don't know who he be?"

"No. He walked in this afternoon, from Lord knows where. He were soaked with the rain; and what with the walking, or the cold, or something, he took a fit of coughing so bad that he broke a blood-vessel, or something of that sort, and there he's a been in bed ever since."

"But why didn't 'ee send for the doctor to once?"

He wouldn't have him. It's my belief he don't want to now'd; but when he found how bad he was a-getting, he as how we might send; but, for all that, he wouldn't have 'om go, if I hadn't a promised to come here for yew."

A queer business, sure enough. I can't refuse a dying ; though what he wants me for, the Lord only knows. I pose, I'd a better start to once. Now, then, wet your whistle that. It'll do 'ee a power of good after your soaking." Jim had raised the saucepan from the fire and poured a portion of the contents, hissing hot, into a tumbler, adding thereto a small quantity of ginger and sugar, from the dresser hard by. He took a draught, the length of which fully revealed her appreciation of the refreshing beverage, and then set down her tumbler, nearly empty, on the table.

"Shall I stay with the missus till yew do come back?" she asked.

"No call for that," Jim responded. "Susy be with her. I'll be glad to see yew, however."

"Better not," responded the other. "It'll only upset her this time o' night, and the sooner I'm back the better."

"As yew please," said Jim, as he proceeded to take down a check coat from a peg in the corner of the room. "After all," he added, "it'll only be going out an hour earlier than I meant. They've a been uncommon busy down in Long Wood lately, and I was a-going to take a turn round to see if I could drop on any of 'em. It ain't to be wondered at, sure 'nough, for pheasants be running about as tame as fowls, and nobody ever comes to shoot 'em."

"Sir Robert's away in foreign parts still, I suppose?"

Yes, and likely to stop there. Young Master Arthur wake us up a bit by-and-by, I sim. He be ready for any amount of sport, he be. Uncommon fine boy he be, too. I'll take a look up-stairs afore we go, to see if the missus all right."

Jim stole noiselessly up the narrow stairs, which ascended from the passage, but returned in a few minutes, and reported that "missus" was asleep. He was followed by Susy, a healthy, good-natured servant-girl, who had come down to make fast the door after the two should have departed.

Jim lighted a short pipe, and, placing it between his teeth, took his gun from a corner of the room, intending, as he said, to make a round, after visiting the sick gentleman who lay ill at the little country inn which rejoiced in the name of "The Hare and Hounds." After pressing another glass of cider upon Betty, which she without much difficulty disposed of, and helping himself to an equally copious draught, Jim and his companion left the cottage together, and, setting their faces to the storm, which still raged without, they pursued their way, with sturdy strides, towards the inn.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### AT THE LITTLE INN.

"Is he come?" asked the sick man, turning wearily on his pillow.

"Not yet," replied the good-natured landlady, who had taken upon herself the office of nurse until some arrangement could be made; "I can't think what's come to the doctor: he ought to be here now."

"Hang the doctor! he can do me no good."

"Don't say that, sir. The Lord be willing, he may bring you quite round again."

"Don't delude yourself with that idea, my good woman. I know exactly how I am; and I know I am not long for

this world. Moreover, except for one reason, I don't much care."

"Hush, sir! You'd better not talk too much. You'll bring on the cough again. Hark, I hear somebody below now. I'll see who it is."

The landlady hastened from the room. The sick man turned on his pillow to listen.

He was quite young,—not more than three- or four-and-twenty. His features were refined, and would have been handsome, but for the ravages of that fell disease which nips in the bud so many a youthful heart in this changeful clime of ours. The face was worn and emaciated. A hectic flush glowed on the cheek. The eyes were large and lustrous, but even through the traces of illness were filled with a devil-may-care expression, indicative of a reckless life,—a life of willfulness and dissipation, which had probably hastened the climax that was now at hand.

He spoke eagerly, as the landlady re-entered the room.

"Has Price arrived?"

"Yes, sir. He's just come in. Shall he come up?"

"Yes, send him up at once."

He sank back on his pillow, as if relieved. A few moments after, Jim Price entered the room, ushered in by the landlady, who, with the curiosity natural to her sex, lingered to see what would take place.

The sick man waved his thin hands towards her, impatiently. "Leave us," he said, in a peremptory tone.

She obeyed, but only drew the door to after her, without closing it.

"Shut the door, Price," were the next words that issued from the bed.

Price obeyed, dropping the latch of the door into the catch.

"Bolt it," was the further injunction.

The gamekeeper shot the bolt, and then turned towards the bed, wondering what was to come next. He looked at the sick man as he would have looked at an entire stranger.

"Jim, don't you know me?"

Something in the voice made Jim start.

"Why, God bless my soul! Master George!"

"You've hit it, Jim, though you never expected to see me in such a plight as this. How are you, old fellow?"

The thin hand was extended from the bed. Price clasped it in his own brawny one, while the suspicion of a tear for a moment dimmed his sight.

"Lord save us, Master George! to think that I should ever see yew in such a plight as this! Why, yew be gone a'most to a whipping-post."

"I shall be gone altogether before long, Price; that's why I sent for you to-night. There's no time to be lost. If I get another attack, I'm a dead man. Not all the doctors in Christendom could pull me through."

"What do 'ee want me to do?"

"It's a long story, but I must get through it as well as I can. Give me a drop of that milk by your side. It's the only thing the good woman will let me have till the doctor comes. I'd have given her a fiver for a glass of brandy. They seem to be strangers here."

"Old Brown died of drink a year ago. These people took on the house. They came from up country, but they be good sort of folks."

"All the better for me that they are strangers; though I don't believe my own father would know me. I suppose that amiable gentleman is still at sea?"

"You've heered nothing of him, then?"

"How should I till the expedition returns? I only crossed from the continent three days ago, and have had no news of anybody. But I'm losing time. We can talk about general

matters afterwards, if I've any breath left in my body. Now, look here, Price. You know how rough the governor cut up on account of my marriage. He needn't have been so angry. Poor Katie wouldn't have troubled him long. She's dead."

"Yew don't say so, Master George!"

"Yes. It's true enough, Price. She died in my arms abroad, six weeks ago. She was the only person that ever really understood me. If she had lived I should have been a different man. As it was, I took to drink again after her death, and here I am, dying."

He passed his hand feebly across his eyes, and a deep sigh broke from his lips. Price was visibly affected.

"But your heart were always in the right place, Master George. I always said so to my missus."

"It's about your missus I want to speak to you. I was hanging about the old place the day before yesterday, just to see what it looked like after all these years, when I got into conversation with old Tom Dunstan. He didn't know me from Adam, so I plied him with questions about old friends. Naturally, I asked after you, and he told me you were in trouble at present, as your missus had just been confined, and the child was dying. Is this true?"

"I be sorry to say it tes."

"I am grieved both for you and your wife too, Jim; but, strange to say, your trouble will help me to carry out a scheme which came into my head the moment I heard the child was likely to die."

"What be it, Master George?"

"Price, I've got a little daughter myself. I left her with the nurse at Sandport. She's a healthy child, and likely to live, though she has lost her mother. Now, listen to me. I know a few days, a few weeks at the most, must finish me; don't interrupt me, for I havn't too much breath. Your wife was a sort of mother to me always, and I came over here



chiefly with the idea of getting you to take care of my child."

"Oh, Master George, we bain't fit to take charge of she."

"Be quiet. You don't think I'd leave her in the hands of strangers? My old aunt is dead, and, besides, I had too much of her tender care when I was young to make me wish to leave my child in her hands, if she were alive. No, no, I don't care what position in life people are in, so long as they are kind-hearted and honest; and I know you and your dear wife are both. What I should have done without her in my young days, I don't know. When I heard about your baby, a new idea came into my head. If the poor little thing should be taken, could you manage to pass my child off as your own?"

"Lord, Master George! what ever should us do that for?"

"Listen. You know how implacable my father is,—how he swore he would never see my face again, and how he left the old place, vowing he would never return to it. I couldn't trust my child to his tender mercies even if he were here. No. If you can carry out my scheme, you might some day or other find out what his feelings are about me. I expect he will soften when he finds I am dead and gone. If he does, and you think there is a chance of his being kind to my dear little girl, you can tell him the truth. Besides, it is a fancy of mine, and you must not refuse me,—that is, if you can get your wife to consent."

"If you think it be the best thing to be done, you know, the missus would make no objection, sir; but it be a terrible thing for your daughter to come among humble folks like we."

"You may banish that thought at once, Price. Don't you think I should be far happier in the thought that she was among kind-hearted people, who have been kind to me, than I should if she were left to strangers, or to so implacable a man as my father?"

"That may be, sir; but how be we to keep it quiet? It would be sure to leak out."

"No. I have thought it all over, and it can be managed with very little difficulty. There's a wet-nurse with my child at Sandport,—one I picked up in Boulogne. She was anxious to come to England for a change, and was glad of the chance. There is no reason why she should not come at once to your cottage and look after your wife. My child might pass as yours, and, if it should please heaven to take your little one, living as you do in that remote spot, there would be very little difficulty in substituting one child for another. I've arranged all the details in my mind. We can talk about that later on. The children are about the same age. You don't have a visitor once in a month, and no one who comes in casually would know the difference between two babies at that age. Only say you'll consent, and we'll arrange all minor matters to your satisfaction."

"Well, Master George, you know if you be bent upon it I can't refuse."

"And your wife?"

"Whatever I tell her, I know she'll do. She's always a been as fond of yew as I be."

"You've taken a load off my mind; and now as to money matters——"

"Don't 'ee bother yourself about that, sir. Me and my missus don't want no payment from yew."

"Nonsense, Jim! You don't suppose I'm going to saddle my child on you for nothing! No, no. I've already realized the small remnant of the fortune which came to me from my dear mother, and that will be placed at interest for you to draw half-yearly. Then, if you choose to indulge my darling child with a few little extras now and then, you can do so; but I make no stipulation, mind. I leave it all to you. As

to the future, as I said before, you must be guided by circumstances. But, mind, I solemnly bind you to this——”

He was interrupted by a tap at the door.

“Confound them, why do they come bothering here?” he added, impatiently. “See who it is, Price.”

Price went to the door in response to a second rap. The landlady was there with the announcement that the doctor was below.

“Let him come up in three minutes,” the sick man said. “Price, I must see you again after; but, before you go, let me say this, in case I should go out like the snuff of a candle while you are away. You will on no account reveal the secret of my child’s birth unless you see some symptoms of relenting in her grandfather and can get from him some assurance that he will be kind to her. Do you hear what I say?”

“Yes, Master George.”

“You promise?”

“I promise before God Almighty.”

“I need not ask you to be kind to her. I know you will be that. Now get down. It’s as well not to be seen closeted here with me. Come up as soon as he is gone.”

The doctor appeared, and gave a more favorable report of the patient than the kind-hearted landlady had hoped for.

“Will it be possible for me to be removed to Sandport to-morrow?” the patient asked.

“I should fear the removal to-morrow, but if you continue pretty well through the day you might venture the day after, if you can get a comfortable carriage sent over to take you there; but I will see you again before you leave. Meanwhile, I will send you something to keep up your strength. There is one thing I must especially enjoin,—perfect quiet; and,” he added, smiling, “don’t try another walk of ten miles in the rain.”

With that he bowed himself out. The landlady remained

in the room. "Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" she asked.

"Send Price up," was the reply.

"Excuse me, sir, but the doctor particularly said you was to be quiet."

"It is not a matter of choice, my good woman, but of necessity. I *must* see him again to-night."

Price returned, but he had been warned by the landlady, and he begged the patient not to talk any more that night, but to see him again the next day.

"To-morrow may be too late, Price," the other answered, sadly. "I don't put much faith in what the doctor said. I *feel* like a dying man. Look in the breast-pocket of that coat on the chair; not the outer pocket,—the inner one. There's a pocket-book there, is there not?"

"Yes, Mr. Bolt."

"You had better keep it. In case of accidents, I have there drawn up careful instructions and furnished you with all necessary documents. The nurse knows of my intentions with regard to bringing Katie to your cottage, and my agents—Moore and Co., of Lincoln's Inn, whose address you will find in the pocket-book—will arrange all that is necessary about money. Are the family up at the house now?"

"No. Still abroad."

"That will save you some little trouble, as you won't have them to attend to, and they need know nothing of your domestic arrangements. Sir Robert and my father never knew much of each other, I believe?"

"No. It were Sir Robert's brother, Captain Arthur Deverell, who was your father's friend. They were always like one when they were lads, and they went to sea together. Captain Deverell's son comes into the property, the baronet having no child of his own."

"And about your boy: is he alive and kicking?"

"Yes, fay. He be regular pickle, he be. We be obliged to send him away to school as a weekly boarder. His mother could do nought with him at home. A fine-spirited lad, Mr. Bolt, though I say it as ought not."

"Then he won't be in the way of our little scheme, Price?"

"Not he, sir. He never even looks at the babby when he's at home. But, Mr. Bolt, do let me see 'ee again to-morrow. You're flying, as I may say, right in the doctor's face. Yew don't give yourself a chance."

"Very well, old friend. Good-night, if you must go. I confess I should like a few days' respite just to see this affair carried out. But mind, Price, whatever happens, I trust implicitly to you."

"That yew may do, sir, with all your heart and soul."

The honest gamekeeper took the thin hand in his own again, and pressed it warmly.

"Good-night, Master George, and God bless you," he said.

"God bless you, Price, for all your goodness to me. My love to your wife."

"I shall see 'ee early in the morning, sir."

"We'll hope so. Good-night."

The gamekeeper left the room, and the sick man sank back wearily on his pillow.

That night another soul—another unit in the vast scheme of Creation—drifted away into eternity.

In the early twilight hours, from some unexplained cause,—possibly over-exertion,—hemorrhage set in, and before the doctor could arrive the patient was dead.

It was said in the neighborhood that Captain Bolt's wild son had come back to his native place to die. It was known that his wife had died a few weeks before somewhere abroad, but the secret of the child's existence was known only to the nurse and kind-hearted Jim Price and his wife.

## CHAPTER III.

## KATIE.

SPRING-GREEN over all the land. A heaving sea of leaves just rippled by the early morning breeze. The apple-blossoms breaking here and there through the green, like spotless spray. Far above, lost in the blue ether, a lark whose presence is known only by the floods of melody which fall like a bright April shower from some stray corner of a cloud. A realm of deep, intense, endless blue above, flecked here and there with a cloud as white and soft as the breast of a swan. All so pure and fresh and young that the influence of the season steals into the heart and fills it with indescribable delight,—an inner sensation of joyousness at the bare fact of existence, such as no other season can impart.

Here by this mossy bank a fragrance of violets steals upwards as we pass,—the violets themselves unseen in the wealth of vegetation around. The slopes by the woodside sparkle with primroses far and near. Early butterflies flutter into life and sunshine. Anon the hum of a wild bee breaks upon the ear; the woods are alive with song.

“The cuckoo tells his name to all the hills.”

The glad sun looks down with a smile upon the life and beauty he has called forth, and seems to rejoice exceedingly in his handiwork.

Let us follow the windings of this happy stream, down into the shade of yonder dell. It is tired of sunshine. It has come from the far moorland, looming gray above the distant trees. It has reveled in sunlight all through the freshest

hours of the morning, and it hies away to a noonday siesta in the deep recesses of the glen. There are delicious pools down there, where the trout lurks in amber shade, and the flecks of foam from the waterfalls above glide smoothly over the umber-colored pools, or gather into clusters among the ferns and grasses that fringe the bank. Here and there the waters glide to a lower level, over a rounded slope of rock, polished by the ceaseless action of ages; and on either side, high above, ferns, mosses, pendent trees, and festoons of flowers, drape the overhanging rocks, through which, in ages long gone by, the patient waters carved a winding channel and found a passage to the sea.

Half a mile of shade. A delicious retreat in the sultry noonday hours; where even the hum of insects is almost hushed, and the dragon-fly and kingfisher—rivals in lustrous hues—glance like prismatic beams athwart the gloom, and the babble of the stream comes up, subdued and soft, through the curtain of verdure that sweeps to the water's edge.

Then the stream breaks away again with a ripple, like a silvery laugh, and courses over shining pebbles, where a keen angler would cautiously drop his fly, and where, ten to one, the wily trout who watches at the foot of the stickle would rise at the tempting bait, only to find it—like the baits that tempt mankind—as delusive as it is bright. Beyond the stickle, a stretch of green meadow on one side, and on the other deep woods,—the sacred preserves of Norton Towers,—renowned for pheasant and woodcock, and cautiously guarded, night and day, by stalwart men, of whom Jim Price is chief.

Standing on the mead, beside the stickle, you may see the smoke from his cottage curling up among the trees, half a mile away. It is some distance from "The Towers,"—three miles or more,—and a young man whose hand is not yet thoroughly "in" at fly-fishing, and who had been trying all the most likely spots since early morning, with but indifferent

success, would be not unlikely to throw himself on the tempting turf at this point, and look with longing eyes towards the distant smoke, wondering, possibly, whether a draft of the far-famed cider of the district might be had, for love or money, in that sylvan abode.

Some such thought as this was evidently revolving in the mind of young Arthur Deverell, as he lay on the grass before-mentioned, and reflected on the result of his morning labors. The spotted denizens of the stream had been unusually wary. His basket was but a few ounces heavier than when he set out from "The Towers." Being of a somewhat impatient disposition, he contemplated the result with a considerable feeling of disgust, and felt half disposed to pitch basket, rod, flies, and fish bodily into the stream. Nine times out of ten the result of angling is the same. The fish wisely refuse to be taken in; the angler rails at fate, and illogically considers himself an injured man. Had he slain a basket-full of the finny tribe, he would have been in a seventh heaven of delight. Has civilization quite done its work, or are we still semi-barbarians?

But there was the smoke, with doubtless a cottage, or some dwelling, beneath, and the young man rose up, literally in hot haste.

"A glass of cider I *must* have. I have a sort of dim recollection that Jim Price's cottage is somewhere about here. I know I went to it ever so many years ago,—ages it seems to me. Let me see: when was it? Last time I was here. That must have been six years ago at least."

Six years to a youth of sixteen! What untold ages it seems! Yet how the years race by when we are growing old! Six years! they seem but a few hours, but in youth they are like a long life.

"How am I to get across? Aha! I think I see a shallow down yonder. It won't hurt me much this hot weather if I



get a wetting ; but down there I don't believe it is over my boots."

Sixteen doesn't stick at two feet or so of water. It rather likes a wetting than otherwise. It implies a soul above trifling physical discomforts. Childhood is fond of water and dirt. In London we see children leaping with joy round heaps of roadside slush, and rejoicing if one plumps into the middle ; but the unsympathetic mother emerges from a dark alley, and jerks Tommy from his slush and his fun with a vehemence which makes Tommy howl. The mother forgets that she once reveled in slush herself.

Young Deverell reached the farther side without difficulty, and struck out straight towards the cottage. A little gate at the border of the wood opened on a winding path, and this led through trees, bright with early foliage, to Jim Price's cottage.

It wore a somewhat different aspect from the one we remember on a certain rainy night twelve years ago. Jim Price was older by that number of years than he was when we saw him last, and he bore traces of it in the furrowed brow and the silver streaks in his once jet-black hair. He had known sorrow, too, for the wife, who had been to him a helpmate for so many years, had been taken from him ; and, but for one bright spot in his existence, his life at the cottage would have been a lonely one indeed.

He was busy in the little plot of garden round the house as young Deverell approached. At the sound of footsteps he looked up, and, on recognizing his visitor, touched his cap, and advanced to meet him. The boy was the first to speak.

"Good-morning, Price. I thought your diggings were somewhere about here, but I wasn't sure. It's so long since I was here before, that I hardly remember the different places. I intended to have asked you the way when you were up at

the house yesterday, but I forgot it. What a fine show of blossom you have!"

"Tolerable, Master Arthur. If it don't get nipped by the late frosts, we shall have a good crop. Any sport, sir?"

"Nothing to speak of. Only half a dozen miserable little things about as long as your finger. I came to see if I could get a glass of cider. The sun is as hot as if it were the middle of summer."

"If yew do like it rough, I can give 'ee as good a drop as you'd get anywhere."

"That's the sort of stuff. We can't get the genuine stuff up in our parts; it's all doctored."

"Matched, Master Arthur."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the Londoners won't drink cider if so be it ain't sweet; so they burns a lot of brimstone matches in a half-filled cask, and this keeps the cider sweet. That's what they do call matching of it. They tell me nothing else will sell in London. Just step in and take a seat, sir, while Katie gets the cider."

"Let's have it here, Price. I'll sit on this stump while you go on with your work."

"As yew plaze, sir," responded Price. "Here, Katie,—Katie, I say!"

A girl's voice responded from the cottage, and the next moment a face appeared at the latticed window, which caused young Deverell to open his eyes wide with astonishment and admiration. It was that of a girl of twelve years old or thereabout; but it was so unlike the peasant faces which the boy had been accustomed to encounter in the neighborhood that he could hardly believe his eyes. There was the rosy glow of health, the cheek browned by the constant exposure to sun and air, it is true; but under all this was a refinement of feature and a purity of expression such as one rarely meets

with even among those whose lot it is to be brought up amid luxuries and refinements. Above all, there was in the pure blue eye and the golden hair, which played about the forehead and cheeks, that look which seems to lift some faces above the common run of earthly beauty and connect it, in some indefinable way, with our notions of the divine. It is a look which, at any rate, can have no part with evil. Tenderness, truth, gentleness, all womanly virtues are a part of it. Such eyes, with their calm open sincerity, could no more deceive you than an angel could. In youth or age you might trust them as you would your own heart. They could never beguile or betray.

"Your daughter?" asked the boy, in amazement.

"Yes. My only one. My only comfort in life, now my poor missus be gone," Price answered, sadly.

"But your son Jim, where is he? What fun we used to have together when I was quite a little chap! Jim was very kind to me. Is he not here?"

"No, sir. He took it into his head to go to foreign parts. He didn't like the notion of settling down here; he wanted to make a fortune right off. He went to the gold-fields in Victoria two years ago. Katie, a jug of cider for Master Arthur. I see he was not one to settle down quietly; he was always fond of roving: so I thought it were better to let him go."

"Have you good accounts of him?"

"Well, only middling. He don't seem to stick to one thing. He be a rolling stone, Master Arthur. He got tired of the diggings, where he hadn't much luck, and now he be at work on a sheep-farm, and hopes to get one of his own some day, he tells me, but that wants pretty much capital."

Katie advanced from the house, jug in hand. In the full blaze of sunlight, with the cottage porch and its twining creepers as a background, she was a picture which Gainsborough

would have rendered to perfection. The face was suffused with blushes now, for Katie's was a beauty which, like the hidden flower, usually blushed unseen, and a stranger—more especially one in the form of a handsome youth in rough but fashionably cut knickerbockers—was, indeed, a *rara avis* in the land. She had scarcely ever looked upon such a sight before, and the novelty, together with the consciousness of the ardent gaze fixed upon her by the boy, overwhelmed her with shyness.

Sixteen is a susceptible age. It is a question whether any after-passion is more pure and genuine than the love of boyhood, before the knowledge of the world's sin and sorrow dims its lustre and steals away its fragrance. Passion that tears the soul to tatters may stir us to greater depths in after-life, but the love of childhood is like the love of angels,—unruffled by the promptings of passion, unsullied by the consciousness of sin.

The three were soon engaged in an animated conversation. Katie's shyness wore off a little, and she took her visitor, at his earnest entreaty, to see her ducks and chickens, and a black ball of a retriever pup, which was just beginning to understand existence, and treating it all as a joke.

Then Price took Master Arthur down to the stream, and showed him the most killing flies, and initiated him into the mystery of insinuating his fly into dark corners overshadowed by troublesome foliage, without winding his tackle hopelessly round the twigs. Then Arthur, attracted by Katie's bright eyes, accepted an invitation to join the homely mid-day meal; which was spread with irreproachable neatness in the cottage parlor in honor of the distinguished visitor.

That was a memorable day to young Deverell. It came back to him often in the after-time, as he pored over musty volumes at Eton or urged the four-oar along the shining surface of the Isis. The bright spring morning; the pure white apple-blossom in the orchard, together with the fresh spring

flowers of the little cottage garden; the peas beginning to court the brown old sticks with their delicate green tendrils, like the soft hands of children clinging to the withered palms of age; the bees renewing their almost forgotten acquaintance with the flowers; the yellow butterfly, beguiled prematurely from its cocoon by the April sunshine; the twitter of the building sparrows, and the mellow reiteration of the cuckoo from the neighboring woods; the new and strange sensations of delight in his heart as he returned up the glen towards his uncle's house when the day declined,—all this dwelt in his mind for many a long day, and turned to sunshine many a gloomy hour.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

It was the same time of the year as that in which our story opens,—the time of the autumn equinox. The same weather, too, prevailed. The wind swept in fierce gusts over the vast park at Norton Towers; the rain fell in torrents; the landscape, usually so fair, was blotted out; heaven and earth seemed coming together; desolation reigned around; leaves were stripped in whirling clouds from the stately trees, and twigs and even large branches strewed all the ground.

Towards evening the wind suddenly veered and dropped; the sun came out from a space of amber sky beneath a line of heavy gray clouds; the birds, baffled and beaten all day, burst into one universal chant of joy from among the glittering leaves.

Sir Robert Deverell and his wife were coming home to Norton Towers after their long sojourn abroad. They drove

away from the railway-station at Sandport just as the sun was dipping beneath the western hills. The chestnuts which drew the cosy family-carriage were fast steppers, and there was still considerable light in the sky when they passed the lodge-gates and entered upon the two miles of narrow road which wound through the park. The road, for the greater part of the way, followed the course of the stream, rising and falling with the inequalities of the ground, now to the level of the water, now far above it, with rocks and trees intervening in the depths below. On the right rose a steep hill-side, with overhanging masses of rock and luxuriant depths of ivies, ferns, and grass. The overarching trees cast a deeper shadow here, and necessitated careful driving at this hour.

The carriage approached a sudden turn of the road at the foot of a steep declivity. Suddenly the coachman caught sight of a small white figure by the roadside, frantically waving its arms.

"Stop! stop! oh, please stop!"

The cry was one of intense entreaty. The coachman almost involuntarily checked the horses, which were advancing at a quick step. The little figure ran beside the carriage, still calling, "Oh, stop! please stop! you will be killed!"

The coachman was a man who valued his life. The carriage was brought to a stand-still. The baronet put his head out of the window, calling to the coachman, "What on earth is the matter, Wells?"

"Don't know, Sir Robert. This little girl here is shouting for us to stop."

The child was out of breath. She stood panting beside the carriage, looking frightened.

"Oh, if you please, sir, the road is washed away," she gasped. "The carriage would tumble over into the stream."

This brought my lady's head to the window.

"Good heavens! what is she saying?"

A footman had extricated himself from his wraps and the seat behind. The lady's maid by his side felt disposed to scream.

"Where is it, my little girl?" quoth the baronet.

"Just round the corner, sir. Indeed you cannot go on."

"See what it is, William," said the baronet to the footman.

William cautiously advanced. It was out of his line,—and fashionable footmen draw a hard and fast line at what is strictly considered their duty; but in this case William had no option. He peered round the corner only a few yards in advance of the carriage.

"Oh, good Lord!"

He came back again in hot haste.

"The road is completely gone, Sir Robert," he said, touching his hat.

If a properly-trained footman told you your mother had just died, he would touch his hat over the news; and somehow we all like it in these conventional days.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the baronet. "What abominable neglect not to have sent to the lodge. We might all have been killed, my dear!"

"How very dreadful!" said easy-going Lady Deverell, subsiding into her corner and her furs.

"Oh, if you please, sir, it wasn't so just now," said the little girl. "Father sent me up to the house half an hour ago, and the road was all right then. I only saw it as I came back."

"What a very merciful thing! Let me get out."

The baronet descended cautiously. He was a man of sixty or more, inclined to corpulency, gout, and various other ailments that are wont to afflict us as we advance in years,—especially if we take life too luxuriously. Hence the baronet's partiality to German baths and waters.

Taking William's arm, he advanced slowly to the turn of

the road. When he saw what was before him, he too uttered a similar exclamation to the one of which William had delivered himself.

Indeed, the sight was alarming enough, but it was one which in a locality of this kind might present itself at any time. The heavy rain had undermined and carried down quite a considerable landslip. A huge mass of rock had slid down from above, and now reposed in the middle of what was once the road, but the débris brought down with the rock had made a clean sweep through the trees, and shaved away the road to a dangerous slope of some twenty-five degrees. Three or four small trees had been also uprooted by the descending mass, and now encumbered the spot with their intertwined branches. Had the child not given the alarm, it is quite likely that young Arthur Deverell might have stepped into his uncle's shoes many years earlier than he could have anticipated in the ordinary course of events.

"Upon my word," the baronet ejaculated, "this is a very serious business. You are a very good little girl," he continued, as he hobbled back to the carriage; "a very good little girl indeed. 'Pon my word, we might all have been killed if you hadn't stopped the carriage. My dear," he added, turning to his wife, "we are really very much indebted to this good little girl. I don't know how to thank her."

Her ladyship inclined her portly person from the open doorway of the carriage.

"What is your name, my little girl?" she asked.

"Price, my lady," answered the child. It had dawned upon her that this must be the great lady of whom she had heard so much, and whose return she knew was expected.

"Price? Price?" echoed the baronet. "Any relation to Price the gamekeeper?"

"His daughter, sir, if you please."



"A very nice little girl indeed," pursued the baronet. "What are we to do, Wells?" he added, addressing the coachman. "We can't go on. It is impossible."

"The only way, Sir Robert, is to go back to the lodge and drive round by the other road. I think we can just manage to turn here, as the bank sets in a bit."

"Then we must be quick about it, for it is almost dark now, and the other road, if I recollect rightly, is by no means a good one. You had better get out, my dear, while they turn the carriage."

By dint of backing the wheels well into the bank, and steadying the horses down the opposite slope for a few feet, the turning was accomplished, and the occupants of the carriage returned to their respective seats. The little girl still stood looking on in a sort of a wonderment at the whole proceeding.

"Why, bless my heart, we can't leave the child there," the baronet exclaimed. "Where are you going, my little girl?"

"Home, sir," the child responded.

"Is your father still in the same cottage?"

"In the cottage the other side of Long Wood, sir."

"Quite so. A mile and a half at least. We can't let her walk, my dear."

"I'm not at all afraid, sir," said the child, catching the last words.

"No, but it's very late to leave you here."

"We can take her as far as the lodge," said my lady.

"Certainly, certainly. Jump in, my dear. We really have a great deal to thank you for."

The child timidly entered the carriage, and took her seat opposite the old couple, with much the same sensation Cinderella must have experienced when she stepped into the fairy chariot.

"And so your name is Price, and you are the daughter of Price, the gamekeeper."

"Yes, if you please, sir."

"Quite a little lady, I declare. Don't you think so, my dear?"

Whatever her ladyship's thoughts might have been, she evidently did not consider it desirable to express them, or to flatter the child to her face. Men are not so considerate in these matters.

"And where do you go to school?" she asked, by way of diverting the conversation.

"I have been to school at Sandport, my lady, but I don't go now. Father is so lonely without me now. Mother is dead."

"Oh, your mother is dead, is she?"

"Yes, my lady. She died two years ago."

"Ah, well, you must come and see me up at the house."

Whether her ladyship considered a visit to the house a panacea for all earthly ills, the loss of mothers included, or whether the invitation arose from a kindly desire to see something more of the child who had rendered them so signal a service, we will not pause to inquire. Perhaps the fact of having enjoyed throughout her whole married life all the attention and homage that wealth can command made her regard even the service the child had rendered as nothing more than her due. Nevertheless, she was really good-hearted, as far as nature and her capacity allowed, and she sympathized with the child in the loss she had sustained by her mother's death.

By this time the lodge was reached, and, as the other road to The Towers led in a direction away from the cottage, the child was put down, and a person from the lodge dispatched with her to her home.

"Now, don't forget that you are to come and see me," said her ladyship, at parting. "Tell your father I say so."

"Yes, my lady," responded Katie, wondering the while

how she should ever summon courage to pay the promised visit.

The carriage rolled away, leaving Katie standing with a sort of bewildered feeling at the remembrance of the occurrences of the last hour. What would her feeling have been could she but have foreseen the ultimate result of that evening's adventures? It would have seemed to her like the wildest dream of romance!

Meanwhile, the baronet appeared lost in thought.

"A singularly engaging little girl that. I can't quite make it out. You would never take her for a daughter of Price. She speaks almost as well as you or I do, my dear. Don't you think so?"

Whether Lady Deverell resented this notion does not appear, for she did not condescend to reply. She was accustomed to a certain amount of what she would call "maundering" on the part of her spouse, and had gradually fallen into the way of not noticing it. It was a philosophic mode of meeting the difficulty, as it saved much disputation, and at the same time allowed a latitude to the baronet which gratified him.

"I wonder if Bolt is back," he went on, "or whether the Somerses still have his house. There's one thing, they never had money to keep up the place properly. The Bolts were always poor; so perhaps they are wise to let. What a miserable business it was, his son turning out so badly! By the way, when will Arthur be down, my dear?"

"At Christmas, I suppose. How the boy's grown! I hardly knew him."

"A fine boy,—a very fine boy. Very like his poor father. But, upon my word, I can't help thinking of our narrow escape. We positively might have been killed. You don't seem to realize that, my dear."

"Oh, something or other generally happens to prevent acci-

dents of that sort," Lady Deverell condescended to reply. It was as much as to say that Providence so far respected their wealth and position as to turn aside any casualties which might befall humbler folks; and, indeed, she had glided so smoothly through life that there might have been some justification for her belief.

---

## CHAPTER V.

## UP AT THE GREAT HOUSE.

"AND so my lady asked yew to come and see her, did she, Katie?" said Price, for the twentieth time, as they sat at breakfast next morning. "Well, yew must put on your best bib and tucker and go up like a lady; there's no saying what she mayn't do for 'ee. Don't 'ee lose no time about it. I be going up myself to-morrow, and yew can go with me."

"Oh, father! I shall be so dreadfully frightened. I wish my lady hadn't asked me."

"Nonsense, child! What is there to be frightened at? They won't eat 'ee; besides, after two years' schooling, you can hold your own with the best of 'em. I say yew don't know what it may lead to."

"But I don't want it to lead to anything. I'm very happy here."

"And what's to become of 'ee when I'm dead and gone? Yew can't go on living here alone then."

"Oh, please don't, father. Pray God that's a long way off yet."

"Well, we'll hope it is, my girl. Same time yew musn't lose a chance like this: so get yourself ready in the morning,

and we'll start early, as I've two or three things to attend to on the way."

The next day was an important epoch in Katie's life. She was up early, having many little things to attend to before she could start. Breakfast over and her various duties completed, she donned her best hat and mantle, and took her way with the gamekeeper towards the great house, of which, with its inmates, she stood so much in awe.

Price was usually a taciturn man, but on this particular morning he was more taciturn than ever. His thoughts were running upon one subject. Was this accident ordained as a means of bringing Katie into connection with the class to which she properly belonged? Might it not be the means eventually of affording him an opportunity to reveal the secret of her birth without in any way betraying the trust reposed in him by young Bolt? If he saw symptoms of relenting in the grandfather, if he thought there was a probability of the child's being treated with kindness, he was to make him acquainted with the truth: but how was this knowledge to be arrived at unless the child were brought into connection with the captain,—or admiral as he now was? Price was a conscientious man, or he would not have attempted to bring about this result. Katie had become to him as his own child. Her sweet disposition and winning ways had been his greatest solace in many a sorrowful hour. She was all in all to him now. Had he consulted his own inclination, the secret which he had guarded so closely for so many years would never have been revealed; but the strong sense of duty he possessed forbade this, and he felt that the chance must not be lost of giving Katie some insight into the manners and customs of those among whom eventually her lot might be cast.

Even now he could not entirely put away from him the thought that she was something superior to himself and his humble abode. Through all his love and affection for the

child there was a sort of deference in his manner which had been noticed by more than one, but which had been ascribed to the fact, as people supposed, of her being an only daughter, and to the unusual beauty and refinement of the child.

It was his sense of duty also which had determined him to send Katie to a superior class of school in Sandport, rather than to one which people in his own rank in life would have chosen. It was thought an unwise act, but it was set down to his great pride in the child; and the quickness and aptitude she displayed, together with the rapid advance she made in her studies during the few months of her stay, at once silenced all objectors, and proved that Price had not been so far wrong in his judgment.

The primitive hour at which Price and Katie started brought them to the great house long before my lady had made her appearance at the breakfast-table. Price had some business matters to attend to with the steward, and Katie was left to while away the time as best she might in the housekeeper's room.

After waiting there for upwards of half an hour in a state of considerable trepidation,—for it is the anticipation of the plunge, not the plunge itself, which causes us most anxiety,—a message came that she was to go to the morning-room, as her ladyship would be there in a few minutes.

A footman, whose buttons and calves Katie gazed upon with a feeling akin to awe, led her through a realm of wonder to the room in question, and there left her to her own devices.

Perching herself on the extreme end of a couch of flowery chintz, Katie gazed around her with increased amazement. She had never been in the presence of such grandeur as this before.

The room was a very pleasant one, facing the south, and the sunlight was beginning to steal in through the half-low-

ered blinds, scattering a hundred lights like a broken rainbow from the various prisms and drops of cut glass about the room.

A conservatory opened on the western side. Its stands were filled with autumn flowers which sent a delicious fragrance through the room; and on every side vases of the rarest manufacture and design were filled with the same choice blooms, which, mingling harmoniously with the rich mosaics, the elaborate buhl, and the profusion of gilded tracery around, made up a sort of paradise to the eyes of the child, whose utmost notions of grandeur were associated with the best parlor of the school at Sandport.

By-and-by my lady came in. Katie looked up in awe, expecting to find gorgeous silks and satins, and little anticipating the warm shake of the hand with which she was greeted, and the almost homely attire which met her gaze. She began soon to feel quite at her ease with the great lady, who questioned her closely as to her occupations, her education, and her pursuits, and ended by asking her to read some passages from a favorite book, in which task, though terribly nervous, Katie acquitted herself so creditably that she drew forth the warmest commendations. Then she was told to amuse herself in the conservatory while my lady departed to hold a conference with Price, the result of which filled that honest gamekeeper's heart with many conflicting feelings, and sent him home in so thoughtful a mood that Katie fancied some misfortune must have befallen him, or that poachers were heavy on his mind.

The fact is, Lady Deverell had made a proposition to him which troubled him more than he liked to admit, even to himself. Like all good-hearted people who have no family of their own, her ladyship was fond of children. She had taken a great fancy to Katie's winning face and manners on the night when the child had rendered them so signal a service. The questions she had put to her as to her education, her

style of reading, and the general intelligence she displayed, convinced her that the child was endowed with an unusual intellect for one in her lowly position. Now that they intended to remain more at Norton Towers, it occurred to her that the girl might be useful to her in many ways; and she preferred having a child about her whom she could train up to her own wishes and ways, rather than an older person who had been accustomed to the habits of other people. In short, her ladyship had proposed to take Katie to live in the house, if Price were disposed to part with her; on which point, of course, so great a lady thought he could never hesitate.

To her surprise, however, the proposition failed to elicit the signs of gratification which my lady had looked for; and, to her still greater surprise, Price informed her, with a profusion of thanks and much stammering and confusion, that he would think the matter over, if her ladyship would let him, and decide in the course of a day or two.

"The truth is, my lady, the house would be uncommon lonely like without Katie. She's been a'most everything to me since I buried my poor missus, and it will be hard parting with her."

My lady was too good-hearted not to admit the force of the argument; indeed, she could not but respect the honest game-keeper for the affection he displayed. At the same time, the hesitation came as a kind of rebuff, and a rebuff was a thing so entirely apart from Lady Deverell's experience that she drew herself up somewhat haughtily.

"But you surely forget the advantage it would be to the child?"

"No, my lady,—asking your ladyship's pardon,—I know all that, and I can't be too thankful to your ladyship for thinking of the child. It's only come upon me rather sudden like, and if I might have a day or two——"

"Oh, by all means. I would not on any account take her



away against your wish ; but, remember, it is an opportunity she may not have again."

So, as I said before, Price was sorely troubled in his mind as to the course he ought to take. The child had been consigned to him as a solemn trust. Would he, therefore, be justified, under any circumstances, in handing her over to another ? And, further, ought he allow the child of young Mr. Bolt to take the place of a dependant, even under such favorable auspices as were now presented ? The grandfather, Admiral Bolt, was still absent, and might not return for years. Price could not break his promise by revealing the secret of her birth to Lady Deverell ; at the same time, he was too sensible not to be fully alive to the unexceptionable advantages which would accrue from the offer her ladyship had made. Then, on the other hand, his own love for the child was a mighty weight to set in the balance against prospective advantages ; but he was too conscientious to allow this to influence him wholly, if he felt that his acceptance of the offer would not be inconsistent with the promise made to the dying father. These various reflections were quite sufficient to induce an unusual taciturnity in honest Jim Price during the rest of the evening, and, in spite of robust health and his hardy life, to cause him many wakeful hours through the silent watches of the night.

But Providence, which works in such mysterious ways, often cuts the Gordian knot of our temporary difficulties in a manner the least expected. The following day Price received intelligence from one of the under-gamekeepers, that their sworn foes, the poachers, had been at work again, and information was received from a recusant member of the fraternity that a raid on a favorite preserve was to be made, on a large scale, that night.

Organizing his forces, Price laid an ambuscade in the said preserve, at an early hour, with the determination of taking

vigorous measures to put a check at once and forever to the lawless band, who produced the same irritating effect on the gamekeeper's mind as a blister would on his body.

There was a desperate meeting,—a bloody fight; five of the poachers were captured, two were carried home badly wounded, but poor Jim Price, who had valiantly led the attack, was carried to a neighbor's cottage, in the gray of the early morning, with a gunshot wound in his side, which stopped at once and forever any further debate on the subject of Lady Deverell's offer, and left Katie a second time an orphan.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NEW LIFE.

JIM PRICE's death settled the question with regard to Katie. Some distant relatives of her supposed father would have taken her, it is true, but they evinced no particular desire to do so; and, in spite of her awe of the great lady of the House,—which, however, her late interview had tended somewhat to dissipate,—she much preferred going there, to being cast upon the charity of people who were almost strangers to her, and who at once gave up all claim as soon as they heard Lady Deverell's desire concerning her.

So Katie took up her abode at Norton Towers, and as soon as her grief for her father's death began to abate a little, and the new life at the great house became more familiar, she could not fail to realize the importance of the change which had taken place.

Her sweet disposition, and readiness to oblige in every little detail, so won upon the baronet and his wife that before long

she began to be treated more like a daughter than a dependant, and the gentleness and unvarying courtesy she displayed towards that usually envious tribe, the domestics, won even their hearts, in spite of the unnecessary fuss, as they regarded it, which the baronet and his wife made about Jim Price's daughter.

Young Arthur Deverell did not, after all, pay his promised visit at Christmas. He was carried off to the north by some school companion. Before the opportunity again occurred of passing a vacation at Norton, the baronet had grown tired of the place.

"These confounded fogs and east winds play the very dickens with me, my dear," he would say, as he writhed under repeated attacks of rheumatism, lumbago, *et hoc genus omne*. "I shall never be well in this abominable climate. We must try Homburg again."

So to Homburg they went, of course taking Katie with them. Then when the winter approached, instead of venturing again to encounter the fogs and frosts of home, they turned southward once more, and by the shores of the blue Mediterranean sought the perpetual sunshine which comes but rarely to bless those whose destiny it is to pass their winters in the British Isles. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that those who have no encumbrances and plenty of means, and are, moreover, given to lumbago, should emulate the swallows, and flit when the chilly autumn nights give warning of the discomforts to come.

An attractive villa on the shores of Como at length settled the baronet's mind with regard to a winter abode; and, Homburg being indispensable in other seasons, a long interval passed away before they again thought of crossing the narrow strip of sea which so completely separates us from our continental neighbors.

What a new life thus dawned upon the young girl who had

spent all her early years in a little cottage in a remote part of Devon! A new world seemed opened to her. Indeed, it was difficult to realize that she had not passed into another planet altogether. Almost every wish was gratified. The old couple now regarded her quite as an adopted child. The best masters were placed at her disposal, and her natural aptitude enabled her to acquire all the most desirable accomplishments with unusual facility. Both the baronet and his wife themselves derived an advantage from these pursuits, for Katie would read and play to them by the hour, and was never tired of adding to their comforts by various little devices which would never have occurred to them.

Meanwhile, the handsome boy who had spent such a happy day in Jim Price's cottage little dreamed of the fate which had befallen the bright-eyed girl who dwelt so vividly in his memory. The fact of taking the child into her household was of so little importance to Lady Deverell that she had of course never even mentioned it to Arthur or his mother. There was but little communication between them during the sojourn abroad, and Arthur was too much immersed in the various attractions of college life to trouble himself with inquiries into the domestic arrangements of an uncle and aunt, to whose extensive property he knew he must succeed, but who had been to him somewhat of a myth during his early childhood, and were almost strangers to him even now.

At length some business which could not be set aside brought Sir Robert and his wife back to England during the London season. It was so long since Lady Deverell had seen London in its gayest garb, that she was seized with a sudden desire to enter into its gayeties once more. She had been a reigning beauty in her time, and her presence was still an important influence in the gay world.

The old family-house in Berkeley Square had been shut up for years. Indeed, it was so long since the shutters had been

unclosed that a tradition had gone abroad that it was haunted, and small boys of the neighborhood looked askance at it and wondered in what part of the premises the ghost was wont to appear.

It was not thought worth while to disturb the repose of the old house for the short time the Deverells proposed remaining in town. A widowed cousin of my lady's, Mrs. Montagu Gore, who possessed a bright-looking modern mansion, covered from roof to basement with creepers and scarlet geraniums, had begged them to take up their abode with her. The widow was not one

"To pull the thorn her brow to braid,  
And press the rue for wine."

She had got over the loss of her husband, some seven years dead; she had no children to absorb her thoughts, and she had nothing to wean her fancies from the round of gayeties she was wont to pursue throughout the London season. Lady Deverell could not possibly have put herself into better hands after her long isolation from London life, and it was an opportunity for her protégée Katie to be initiated into the marvels of fashionable society at home, which was not to be lost sight of.

It was the commencement of the long vacation, and young Arthur Deverell, on his arrival in town, lost no time in paying his respects to his uncle and aunt. The liberality of the former had always enabled him to indulge in his favorite tastes to an almost unlimited extent, and he arrived at Rutland Gate, a week or two after his relatives' advent in town, on one of the finest-stepping bays that had ever gladdened the eyes of connoisseurs in horse-flesh, even in that wondrous region of equine marvels, the Park.

After a cordial greeting, Arthur settled down into a long chat with his aunt concerning the events of the last five years. In the midst of this there came gliding into the room, with a

step as light as the Tennysonian Olivia's, a girl of seventeen. or thereabout. Rich masses of brown hair, innocent of the swindle of puffs and frisettes, wreathed in graceful coils her exquisitely-shaped head. She was in a riding-habit, which displayed to perfection that lithe, undulatory movement of the figure which is indicative of faultless proportions. She hesitated a moment when she saw Arthur, then advanced with a slightly deepened tint in the roses of her cheeks.

"What! not gone yet, Katie? I thought you were to ride with Blanche?" Lady Deverell exclaimed.

"I have been waiting for her, but have just had a note to say she can't come. I am so sorry."

A voice like the gurgle of a stream, with a far-off cadence in it, like the said stream under green leaves.

"How very provoking! Let me see. You don't know Katie, I think," Lady Deverell said, turning to her nephew.

"I have not that pleasure," responded Arthur, bowing low, and wondering who on earth "Katie" could be.

"You must rest content with the groom," continued Lady Deverell; "but perhaps you don't care to ride alone?"

"I confess I do not," said Katie, sitting down, and looking somewhat disconsolately towards the distant "Row," where the showy horses and bright equipages were flashing among the trees.

"If I may venture to offer myself as an escort," said Arthur, a little shyly, "I'm sure I shall be charmed. My horse is here."

"To be sure! Katie will be greatly obliged to you, I know," said her ladyship, answering for her protégée. "It is fortunate you came just at this time. But you will come back and dine with us, of course?"

Arthur had another engagement,—a very particular one,—to dine with a friend at his club. A glance at Katie, however, settled the question.

"I shall be most happy. I want to have a long chat with my uncle. It is such an age since we met. May I write a note here, aunt?"

He went to a side table and scribbled a hasty excuse to his friend. Ten minutes afterwards he was riding with Katie through the nearest gate leading to the Row.

Two well-dressed men were leaning on the railings, looking at the riders. Deverell, junior, was heir to twenty thousand a year, and was already well known in fashionable circles.

"By Jove! what an awfully pretty girl!" exclaims the younger of the two. "Who is she?"

"Don't you know? All London is talking about her. Lady Deverell's protégée, Miss Price. By Jove! what a lucky beggar that young Deverell is! A baronetcy and twenty thousand pounds a year in prospect, and the prettiest girl in London to console him until he comes into the property."

"He'll make up to her, I shouldn't wonder."

"Not he. He'll soar higher. A duke's daughter, or something of that sort. He's not half a bad fellow, but awfully proud. I believe, though, he's one of the few whose ancestors really did come over with the Conqueror, and he knows it."

Arthur and his lovely companion passed on all unconscious of the notice they were exciting, and strangely silent. The former was speculating as to whether his aunt had quite abandoned all sense of propriety to start him off alone with a young girl. The latter, who knew he was coming, recognized him at once, although some six years had passed since his visit to her father's cottage. She was wondering whether he would recognize her, and, although far above the petty pride of being ashamed of her birth, she had sense enough to feel that the knowledge of who she was must come upon him as a startling surprise, even if it failed to awaken a more

disagreeable feeling. As to Lady Deverell, considering that she had grown to look upon Katie almost as her own daughter, it seemed to her the most natural thing in the world to start her off with her nephew, utterly forgetting that he did not even know his companion's name.

Arthur was by no means inclined to grumble at his fate. He considered himself "in luck," and he could not fail to be conscious of the admiration his companion excited. "What a square seat she has! What a light hand! What a figure, and what eyes!" he mentally exclaimed, as he stole a sidelong glance at her. "It's awfully absurd to be riding with her here without even knowing her name. I must make a shot at it."

"Are you staying long in town?" he asked.

"As long as Lady Deverell does. I believe that will be some weeks."

"Then you are staying with my aunt?"

"Of course."

She had looked up at the question in some surprise, but dropped her eyes again before the young man's ardent gaze.

"Why the dickens does she say 'of course'?" exclaimed Arthur to himself; but he had no time to speculate, as his companion went on:

"Don't you know that I am living with Lady Deverell? She has been so kind to me."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Arthur, wondering still more in what capacity so lovely a creature could be living with his aunt.

"You don't seem to remember me," Katie went on. "I knew *you* at once, but——"

There she stopped suddenly. Arthur was beginning to feel foolish. It was quite impossible that he could have met this lovely girl before. He *must* have remembered it.

"I—I—really, I am very stupid, but I don't recollect meet-



ing you before. But surely if I had, I—I couldn't have forgotten it."

Katie was beginning to look confused also. She was too genuine, however, to sail under false colors; so she made up her mind to put herself on a right footing with her companion at once.

"Don't you remember, about six years ago, coming to the gamekeeper's cottage at Norton Towers, one fine spring morning?"

She was absently smoothing her horse's mane with her gold-mounted whip as she put the question, and her face was somewhat averted. The truth was as far from Arthur's thoughts as ever.

"Yes, perfectly," he answered, in some surprise. "That day is among my pleasantest recollections. I was quite a boy then, but everything was so bright and fresh and sunny that I have never forgotten it. But what has that to do with you?"

"Only that I was the little girl who brought you the cider on that occasion."

"You! Impossible!"

He fairly pulled up in the middle of the road, almost causing a wealthy tailor, who was rushing full tilt down the ride, with his toes very much turned out, and a generally loose seat, to come to utter grief.

Katie went on hurriedly.

"It is perfectly true, I assure you. My dear father was killed,—shot in a poaching-fray. Lady Deverell and Sir Robert were so kind to me. I have lived with them ever since. I owe everything to them."

She suppressed the fact of the signal service she had rendered them on the night of their return. Like all really unselfish persons, she remembered only the obligations she was under to others. Arthur sat his horse in utter bewilderment.

"And you really mean to tell me that you are Katie," he said, at length.

"Yes, Katie Price," she answered, not making the slightest attempt to ignore her somewhat plebeian surname.

"Well, I'm awfully glad to see you again, any way. I've so often thought of that happy day. But how very odd that my aunt never told me!"

"You have had so little communication with them. You declined coming to Montreux when we were there, you know."

"Strictly between ourselves, I thought it would be horribly slow. I had not the remotest notion *you* were with them."

In spite of the implied compliment, there was a sort of constraint in his tone. "This exquisite creature Jim Price the keeper's daughter!" he was mentally ejaculating. "I wonder if everybody knows it."

With intuitive sensitiveness, Katie detected the tone. She wished she had not come out with him. For the last year or two, ever since she had begun to expand into womanhood, she had been made almost an idol of abroad. The renowned beauty, the adopted daughter of the wealthy Deverells, had been courted and flattered to an extent which might have excused a certain amount of vanity in her. More than once she had refused an alliance with scions of some of the noblest families abroad. In experience of men and manners, in knowledge of foreign countries, of the fine arts, and of general topics, she was far in advance of her companion. In some remote corner of her heart, moreover, there had always lain perdu a lingering feeling of admiration for the handsome boy who had come so unexpectedly upon her father's cottage in those days, now so long gone by that they seemed more like a dream of the past than absolute realities. With the recollection of these things in her mind, she could not resist the slight feeling of resentment which rose up as she detected Arthur's altered tone.

"Shall we go on faster?" she said, touching her horse's shoulder lightly with the whip.

The animal bounded forward. Arthur had no choice but to follow; and, with the increased pace, and the gathering crowd of equestrians, the opportunity for further conversation, except by snatches, was lost.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN EVENING AT RUTLAND GATE.

IN spite of his unconscious coolness at the revelation of Katie's obscure origin, Arthur Deverell possessed a warm, generous nature. In our artificially constituted society we must all, more or less, bow to the exigencies of caste, and Arthur had a sufficient sense of the responsibilities of his future position to know that it would not be altogether a wise thing for him to fall in love with a keeper's daughter. Katie had attracted him, even in this first interview, to an extent which he hardly liked to confess even to himself, but there was no mischief done yet, and he felt that it would be desirable to put a check upon himself in his future intercourse with her.

Mrs. Montagu Gore was not given to dining alone. When she did not dine out, she liked to entertain people at her own table, and no one could do it better. She possessed that most desirable of all qualities, tact, to an almost unlimited extent. By dint of it, she drew people to her table that many a titled person would have given their ears to have captured. The legs of royal dukes had stretched themselves beneath her damask. She had entertained half a dozen ambassadors and foreign ministers, and addressed them all in their own lan-

guage. The great lights in art, science, and literature professed to gain further enlightenment at her brilliant table; and she achieved all this on an income which a less skillful manager would not have deemed sufficient wherewith to start a brougham.

"I'm told the pheasants are running about like chickens at Norton Towers, Sir Robert," said Val Poingdestre, after the ladies had gone to the drawing-room. "Wouldn't it be a charity to thin them out a bit?"

Val was the younger son of an ancient house, and, as a natural consequence, clever and needy. He always had an eye to business, and to sport.

"I must leave them to the tender mercies of Arthur and his friends. He intends to have a shooting-party there in the autumn, and will, no doubt, be glad to see you."

"But you'll shoot yourself?"

The baronet fairly laughed out. "I've not walked a quarter of a mile for six years," he said.

"Have you tried?" persisted Val.

"I can't say I have. My confounded rheumatism prevents me."

"I should recommend riding to hounds," remarked Val, quietly.

"Riding to what?" roared the baronet. "By Jove, sir, do you wish me to commit suicide?"

"By no means. I'm only giving you the advice Brooks gave the governor. You know Brooks affects Abernethy. 'I want to consult you, Dr. Brooks,' said my father. 'I recommend you to consult Dr. Horse,' said Brooks. 'But I couldn't mount a horse to save my life,' said my father. 'Then get a couple of men to put you up, or half a dozen if two are not enough,' said the doctor. The governor went away in a huff, but I persuaded him to try. It took three of us to get him mounted, and we made him ride a mile, in spite of his groans, which I must admit were appalling. The next day,

we got him up again, and he rode two, the next four, the next eight, and now he rides to hounds as straight as I do, though he's sixteen stone to an ounce."

"There, uncle, you can't refuse to try after that experience," said Arthur. "You can go south after the shooting, just as well as before."

"Why, you young dog, are you too in league against me? No, you must manage to get on without me."

"People say you've deserted the place altogether, Deverell," said a noble lord, who had a place in the neighborhood of Norton: "you really ought to look us up now and then."

"Well, well, I'll see what Gull says about it to-morrow, and if he doesn't order me off——"

"You'll stay for the shooting," chimed in Val. "We shall consider it a settled thing then. I know the doctor won't object."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the baronet, who was somewhat of a *malade imaginaire*. "I'm sure my lady will be opposed to it."

"That remains to be seen, uncle. My opinion is she will like it."

With this they went to the drawing-room.

Arthur slipped in before any of the rest, and went straight to his aunt.

"Aunt, do try and persuade my uncle to stay at Norton for the shooting this year. He is half inclined to do so."

Lady Deverell's eyes opened very wide indeed.

"Half inclined to stay at Norton for the shooting? Impossible!"

"He is, indeed. He went so far as to say he would be guided by Gull's opinion. I hope you do not dislike it."

"I should like it of all things. I'm tired to death of constantly living abroad."

"Well, do attack him on the subject. Here he is."

fo Lady Deverell knew her husband far too well to encourage

him in anything she wished him to do. Is it gout, or what, which renders most men of sixty so obstinate?

"So you think of staying at Norton for the shooting, Arthur tells me?"

"I am thinking of no such thing. I should be out of my senses to dream of such a thing."

"I was just thinking so. I'm sure it would never do for you."

Now, it so happened that the more the idea revolved in Sir Robert's mind the more he liked it. This opposition of his wife's naturally made him still more in favor of it. He went suddenly round.

"I don't see what reason you have to say that. In fact, now I think of it, I'm not sure that I sha'n't turn it over in my mind, and if Gull don't object——"

"I'm sure he *will* object," my lady put in, adroitly.

"I'm not so certain he will," the baronet answered, testily.

"At any rate, I shall ask him."

"I believe my uncle has made up his mind, Poingdestre," said Arthur, crossing to where the originator of the scheme stood talking to Mrs. Montagu Gore.

Several people had dropped in, for the gay mistress of the house was "at home" on this particular evening. There was quite a brilliant assembly.

Arthur glanced round the room for Katie, whom he had taken in to dinner. He was forgetting his resolve already. The young lady in question was carrying on a warm discussion with a renowned German diplomatist in his own language. She hardly appeared to notice Arthur's approach. He felt somewhat at a discount, for, like most young men of the day, he was bad at languages. Women are ten times as quick in picking them up.

"Sing something, Katie," said the hostess: "we're all dying to hear you."

"Certainly, if it will arrest any fatal results," said Katie, rising quietly, and going to the piano.

"May it be 'Sei still mein Herz'?" said the diplomatist, who, like all Germans, was musical. "It was so very charming the other night."

"I have a new one of Kücken's, 'Ach kann ich's sagen.' I know you will like it."

"Ay, yes, I know it is quite charming."

The next moment the singer's voice was thrilling the room with the most tender pathos. Not only was she an accomplished musician, but the true artist feeling was there, causing the acquired facility, perfect as it was, to become quite a secondary matter in comparison with the intense feeling of the singer. People stopped talking, and turned to listen,—a proof of something uncommon in these days, when music is the signal for talking.

"Superb!" said a well-known French artist, coming up to the piano as she concluded. "Will you not give us something of Sullivan's? He is your great song-writer,—so good,—so original."

"With pleasure. What shall it be? 'Oh ma Charmante'?" she suggested, as a compliment to the artist's nationality.

"Ah, yes!" he answered, with a beaming smile: "that is delightful."

Again the voice sent its exquisite cadence through the room. Quite a small crowd gathered round. At the conclusion of the song, there was a burst of applause. It was not the power of the singer which touched them so. In a public hall the voice would have sounded poor and thin possibly, but the intense feeling and perfect taste penetrated every heart.

Katie was the centre of attraction from that moment. Arthur could not believe his eyes, his ears. Was it possible that six years could have transformed the little cottage girl

into this cynosure of a fashionable assembly in the great metropolis? It seemed incredible. Yet such may be the result of training and talent combined.

Arthur was fond of music in a certain sense, but his taste had never been directed to the higher class of composers. Beethoven would bore him insufferably, and Bach send him to sleep. "Does she never sing anything but French and German, I wonder?" he said to himself, as he stood watching her at the conclusion of her last song.

She had risen from the piano, and stood talking to the Frenchman with the same fluency she had exhibited with her German. It was all so modestly done, too, without the slightest thought of display. This one admirable quality, naturalness, seemed to be her leading characteristic.

Arthur was feeling his inferiority more and more, and it nettled him.

"It is difficult to get in a word, Miss Price," he said, abruptly. "I want to ask you to sing an English song."

She looked up at him with the sweetest look of compliance in her eyes.

"What would you like?" she said, seating herself at once.

"I must leave that to you."

She thought a moment, and then commenced Spohr's exquisite melody, "Rose softly blooming."

Arthur stood entranced.

Nothing more beautiful in the way of melody than this song has ever issued from the mind of a composer. It seems to be literally the outflowing of the man's soul, and the singer on this occasion seemed to read the author's intention perfectly. There was not a breath, not the rustle of a garment throughout the room as the last cadence died away.

"What a marvel that girl is!" said the noble lord before referred to, as he leaned against the doorway with Val Poingdestre. "She'll make a good match, I should say."



"If she's that way disposed," remarked Val, dryly: "she may be difficult to please."

"Wasn't she the daughter of a tinker, or something of that sort?" asked a pale-eyed young man, whose grandfather had risen from the ranks to the woolsack.

"If I thought so, I'd turn tinker to-morrow," quoth Val; "but it's not true. Her father belonged to the Woods and Forests Department, and had a shooting-box near Norton Towers."

"Oh, indeed!" said the young man, with prolonged wonder.

My lord turned away to conceal a smile. Val's countenance was perfectly immovable.

The next day it was currently reported that Miss Price's father had been a Commissioner of Woods and Forests, and was an old friend of Sir Robert's.

The conversation became general after Katie's songs. A group gathered around her. The last new opera-singer was discussed, the new tragedian, and the Royal Academy. Then followed a comparison of English and foreign art; the ancient masters and the grand foreign galleries were discussed. Arthur felt bored. He knew nothing of these things. In a winning eight-oar, in a pigeon-match, in a straight line across country, he felt his superiority; but here, in Mrs. Montagu Gore's brilliant drawing-room, he was out of the running altogether. The clever hostess, whom nothing escaped, took in the situation at once.

"Arthur, my friend," she said, as he wished her good-night, "you must come to Rome with me in the winter, and get a month or two at Florence and Venice. Now that you have left college, you have your education to *commence*."

Val and young Deverell strolled home together.

"By the way, Arthur, Lawrence says he'll let you have the mare for three hundred. It's a long price; I shouldn't advise you to buy."

"Well, I don't know. I like the mare, and I managed to pull off a trifle on the Oaks. I think I'll take her."

"You're beginning early, young man. Remember the fate of the Marquis the other day."

"Oh, never fear. I sha'n't go beyond my tether. Anyhow, tell Lawrence I'll have the mare."

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ACROSS COUNTRY.

So far from objecting to the baronet's sojourn at Norton, his doctor strongly recommended it, and advised as much exercise as he could get. The consequence was that a shooting-party was established at the Towers in the fall of the year, and the pheasants were dropping like brown leaves in the prolific coverts which stretched over miles of country around.

There was to be a great meet of the hounds soon after their arrival, and Katie was to make her first essay across country. There was a discussion the previous evening at dinner as to what she should ride.

"Try my mare," said Arthur. "She's as easy as a cradle, has the tenderest mouth in the world, and carries a lady beautifully."

"Arthur had an eye to business when he invested in that mare, evidently," said Poingdestre, looking slyly across the table at him. "I was going to offer you my horse, Miss Price, but it's a great bony brute, and you can't do better than ride the mare. She's so clever at her fences, I shouldn't be surprised if you pound us all."

"I have no intention of exhibiting myself in that way,"

answered Katie. "I gladly accept Mr. Deverell's offer, but you must not expect me to attack the fences just yet."

"I assure you there is not the slightest difficulty," urged Arthur. "You have only to let the mare have her own way, and she'll carry you over everything. A child might ride her. She never flies her banks. She tops them like a cat, and drops on the other side as lightly as a bird. I've even known her to check herself on the top, and pick a sound place to drop. I bought her chiefly for her Devonshire training, though she's equally clever in the grass countries."

"Really, I shall begin to think there is a chance of being in at the death with such a mount," said Katie.

"By no means unlikely, if I may judge by your style of riding in the Park," said Val; "that is, if you'll only follow me," he added.

"I shall put her under your charge, Mr. Poingdestre," said my lady; "and I do hope you will both be very careful. I always so dread an accident."

"My *dear* Lady Deverell," remonstrated Val, "did you *ever* know me come to grief? You do me a cruel injustice."

He put on such an air of injured innocence that everybody laughed. The fact is, Val did everything so quietly that he was thought the most prudent fellow in the world, whereas he was really one of the most dare-devil men living. Not half a dozen riders in Devonshire would take the same line across country with him, and yet he took it all with such consummate ease that he never appeared to be doing anything extraordinary, and he never boasted. Indeed, he was already beginning to be thought a quiet, elderly "party," and was considered quite a sufficient escort for a young lady, though he was in fact only just turned thirty.

Val was magnificently mounted. Small as his means were, whatever he had was always of the best. He brought his horse down from London on purpose for the hunting, as the

baronet, on account of his repeated absences, had but a scratch lot in his stables. Arthur had, however, persuaded him to buy one or two likely-looking hunters which they found in the neighborhood, and the best of these he selected for himself.

The owner of the hounds was one of the oldest sportsmen of the county. He always hunted them himself, and it was a treat to a brother sportsman to see him do it. It was the one thought, the one occupation of his life, and he brought to bear upon it an amount of experience and a loving zeal which carried the art—for art it is—to perfection.

It may seem a pity that a man should devote a lifetime to so ignoble a purpose; but we cannot all be Shakespeares or Michael Angelos, and probably the worthy master of hounds had no brains to excel in any higher pursuit. Besides, whatever the future may bring, as society is at present constituted, somebody *must* hunt hounds, and, if it must be done, it is better that it should be done well. I myself believe that the day will come when "sport," as we are pleased to call it, will be looked upon as a thing of the past. The tendency is all that way. Whether man will be better without it is an open question, but that the brute *will*, there can be no manner of doubt. To live unhunted, and be killed quickly, without unnecessary torture, would be a millennium to the long-suffering brute creation. If dominion were suddenly transferred to them, and they indulged only in *just* reprisals, I wonder how mankind would fare?

But there is one sight which might tempt even worthy Mr. Colam into the hunting-field, and that is a pretty woman well mounted, cantering to cover across a breezy down, on a bright autumn morning. Such a sight was Katie, as they went easily across the open to Long Wood. Val Poingdestre was by her side, on his splendid brown hunter, whose long swinging trot kept him evenly by the side of his companion. Arthur had gone on before, with Sir Harry Selby, the master

of the hounds. Perhaps there was a slight tinge of jealousy in his mind, arising from the fact that Katie had been placed under Val's protection instead of his own; but he would not confess the feeling even to himself.

Val and his companion drew up at the cover-side, where there was already a somewhat extensive group of riders of both sexes. The Honorable and Rev. Vicar of the parish, who never hunted less than three days a week, and by his bonhomie made it appear a virtue in the eyes of his parishioners, rode up to Val. A lady, well mounted, with a graceful figure but somewhat plain face, was with him.

"Morning, Miss Price,—morning, Poingdestre; famous weather for hunting. Let me make you known to my niece, Miss Vereker."

Katie bowed, Val raised his hat; the vicar's horse immediately commenced a *pas seul* on his hind legs for the edification of the field. The pillar of the Church, however, was equal to the occasion, and soon brought his steed to his senses.

"Are you fond of hunting?" said Miss Vereker to Katie.

"I really don't know. This is my first appearance in the hunting-field. I have not the least idea how I shall get on."

"Will you keep with us? The vicar has promised to look after me, and he knows the country thoroughly."

"Thanks very much, but I have put myself under Mr. Poingdestre's care. I am to follow him."

"You've your work cut out for you, then," said the vicar, with a significant smile.

There was no time for more. Sir Harry's eye was the first to detect the fox sneaking out of the cover and going away towards the downs as fleet as the wind.

The old sportsman came through the bushes like a thunderbolt. It was something to hear his "gone away" ring along the cover-side. By twos, threes, and fours the hounds came plunging through the underwood. There was a rapid twisting

of horses, a wild shout or two from the whips, and then all were going away at top of their speed down a slight hill towards a stream in the meadows below.

"The fox is heading towards Beacon Hill. There's a stiff piece of work before us," said the vicar.

"Sit close, and don't be afraid of the water, Miss Price; the mare will take it in her stride," cried Val.

Katie was across almost before she thought about it, and going up the incline on the other side stride for stride with Val. Arthur was riding somewhat in the rear. That it was intentional on his part was evident by the way he kept his horse in hand.

They crossed two or three open fields, divided by low fences, and then came to a bit of level with a stiff Devonshire bank at the far end. The vicar, who knew every gap and gate, edged away with his party to the right. Val went straight for the bank.

"Follow me, Miss Price, and let your mare have her head."

The bank was high and wide, and some brushwood on the top made it look still more formidable. In spite of her confidence in her leader, Katie could not help feeling a little nervous. "Are you sure I can jump it?" she cried, with a slight trepidation in her voice.

"Yes, without the least difficulty, if you don't flurry the mare. It's not half as formidable as it looks."

Val shot ahead, clearing a pathway through the brush on the top. The next moment Katie felt herself lifted with a heave like that of an ocean wave. She was on the top, with a deep drop on the other side, which looked formidable; but the mare dropped, as Arthur had said, as lightly as a bird.

"Well done!" cried Val, as she came alongside him again. "You'll take them all quietly after that. By Jove! this is becoming exciting. About the quickest thing I've known for some time. Ha, ha, ha! there's the vicar pounded, as I live;

won't that be a joke against him? Do you see, they've walled up that gap and baulked him."

Katie, however, was too much occupied with the work before her. The mare was getting warm, and in the excitement seemed to have lost its tender mouth, and was pulling frantically.

"There are two more come to grief," cried Val, as they crossed another fence. "We shall drop the ruck presently, then we shall begin to enjoy ourselves."

Twenty minutes of this sort of work thinned the field. The hounds were going very fast, so much so that it was almost impossible, from the close country, to keep well up with them. Val had settled down to his work. A sort of demon seemed to possess him at these times, and he would have ridden at a church if it stood in his way. Katie had acquitted herself so well up to this time that he miscalculated her powers. The pace was now tremendous, and there was a fence before them which looked more formidable than any Katie had yet encountered. Val was going straight, as usual.

Suddenly, Arthur ranged up by her side. Had he been following her all this time? she wondered. Val was ten yards ahead.

"For heaven's sake don't try that jump, Miss Price," Arthur said, in a hurried tone. "Poingdestre rides magnificently, but he doesn't know the country as well as I do. There's a ditch as wide as a house on the other side."

"What am I to do?" cried Katie.

"Edge away to the right: there's a gate yonder; we shall come up with the hounds almost as quickly that way."

Val was on the top of the bank. He took in the situation at a glance, and in the brief moment at his disposal raised his hand, and shouted, "Go back!" then he disappeared on the other side. Katie felt she had had an escape.

"Thank you so much," she said, turning her bright eyes

on Arthur; "but you will think me a dreadful nuisance. Do go on without me."

"We sha'n't lose much time, and I think it quite possible Val has come to grief," Arthur answered, leading towards a gate which was now seen in the bank to the right. "Can you jump timber?"

"I think I had better not try this time," said Katie: "it looks rather formidable."

Arthur pulled up, and had the gate open in an instant. Passing through, he held it back with the handle of his hunting-whip.

"Now, quick!" he cried; "we shall cut them off at the bottom of the next field. Halloo! you, sir, mind where you are coming. Good God! what are you about?"

A vulgar-looking young man on a big-boned horse was coming obliquely at the gate from the opposite corner of the field. The hard-mouthed animal was going like the wind, throwing up a cloud of turf from his clumsy heels. Right at the open gateway he came, just as Katie was in the opening. There was a violent collision; Katie was knocked clean out of her saddle into a cluster of soft herbage by the bankside, while the clumsy horseman cannoned against Arthur, almost losing his seat.

Red anger flushed into Arthur's cheek. His eyes flashed, he raised his heavy cane and brought it down with tremendous force upon the shoulders of the discomfited horseman.

"Confound you for a blundering fool!" he cried, savagely; "you might have killed the lady."

The other raised his whip as if to return the blow, then checked himself with a sudden effort.

"I'll remember that, Mr. Deverell," he said, with a malicious scowl; "I was about to apologize to the lady, but she doesn't seem very much hurt."

He rode away without another word, but with a look in



his face not pleasant to behold. Meanwhile, Katie had risen, looking a little bit shaken, but not seriously injured by her fall. Arthur was by her side in a moment, doing his best to hold the two horses, which were mad with impatience to get on.

At this moment the vicar appeared on the scene.

"Not much damaged, I hope, Miss Price?" he cried, as he pulled up.

"No, I'm not hurt a bit," Katie answered, laughing; "thanks to the ferns, I came down soft."

"Who was that fellow?" Arthur demanded, his face still glowing with passion.

"Young Bulfinch, the lawyer's son. He'll kill somebody one of these days. He's killed half a dozen hounds already, by riding over them. He takes care to give Sir Harry a very wide berth, I promise you."

"Well, he'll carry the mark of my whip to-day, any way," said Arthur, "and he shall have it again if I come across him."

"Why, did you strike him?"

"Yes, I did."

"That's a pity," said the man of peace. "His father is your uncle's local solicitor."

"I can't help that. He shouldn't come out if he can't manage a horse. What's become of your niece?"

"She's had enough of it, and has gone back with my lord. Excuse me, I only waited to see if you were all right; au revoir."

Away went the plucky vicar, down the field and over the fence at the bottom, while Arthur helped Katie to remount. She placed her neat little foot in his hand, and with his strong arm he lifted her into the saddle. Mounting his own horse, he sat and looked at her inquiringly.

"What's become of my escort?" asked Katie. "You thought he had come to grief?"

"I ought to have known him better. Yonder he goes, close up with Sir Harry. By Jove, what a pace!"

"Quiet, now, quiet!" he exclaimed, as his horse tugged impatiently at the bit. "We are hopelessly thrown out, I fear."

"Oh, I am so sorry! It is all my fault. Is there no chance of your overtaking them?"

"What, and leave you here?"

"Oh, I don't in the least mind. I shall get on somehow."

"You don't feel up to going on?"

"I really don't think I could. I must confess to feeling a little shaken."

"Of course. I was a brute for suggesting it. That confounded fellow has spoiled your day. Come, then, we'll go home quietly."

"You're sure you don't mind?"

"Quite sure."

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### DOWN THE LANES.

It would be difficult to define the terms upon which Arthur and Katie Price had lived during the last three months. They had been very constantly together, but they scarcely seemed to be on a more familiar footing than they were on that first evening at Rutland Gate.

Katie's sensitive nature had never quite got over the sudden coolness which young Deverell had exhibited when he discovered who she was. Deverell, on the other hand, had been so impressed with his own inferiority in those subjects most in accordance with Katie's tastes that he never for a

moment imagined she could feel any particular interest in him. The amount of attention she commanded from people of all ranks in life, wherever she went, had long ago banished from his mind all sense of inferiority in her. Indeed, he looked upon her as something very far superior to himself. The memory of her former humble position vanished before the present attractions of her beauty and accomplishments, and he had grown to look with envy on those whose tastes seemed more congenial with her own, and which appeared to put them at once on a footing of intimacy which he himself never seemed able to attain.

They had left the fields, and were going down a narrow, winding lane, with banks on either side, overshadowed by tall elms. Quite a thick layer of leaves was already beneath their feet, but the rich ferns, which grow so luxuriantly on these Devonshire banks, still spread their fronds of cool green beneath the trees; and so remote and sheltered was the spot that the dew still lay upon the cobwebs which laced the ferns together in their fairy meshes.

"I'm so vexed to think that fellow has spoiled your day," said Arthur. "You might literally have been in at the death."

"It really doesn't matter in the very remotest degree," answered Katie. "I think this is a great deal better," she added, pointing to the wealth of foliage on either side.

"I see you despise sport."

"You quite mistake me. It is only that I don't know enough about it to enjoy it thoroughly. I liked the scamper over hedges and ditches this morning, but I am not sorry it is over. I am only sorry for you."

"Oh, I get quite enough of it, one way and another,—too much, perhaps," he added, a little bitterly.

"Too much! In what way?"

"Oh, I don't know. The truth is, Miss Price, I used to think myself an awfully clever fellow at college, because I

could pull a better oar and ride straighter than most men; but lately, somehow, I've had the conceit taken out of me. I find there are higher things than these, that I know nothing about. If I must speak the truth, I always have the impression that you must think me an utter ignoramus."

Katie turned crimson. "Mr. Deverell, how can you accuse me of any such injustice?"

"Do you mean to say you don't?"

"I mean to say that such an idea never crossed my mind."

"Then how is it you never encourage me to talk to you? Forgive my saying it, but I cannot help noticing that with a different class of men—fellows fond of art, music, science, and that sort of thing—you talk away no end, and seem quite at home with them. While with me—well, now we are on the subject, I may as well make a clean breast of it,—when I attempt to talk to you, there is something in your manner—a coldness, a restraint—which makes me feel—absurd as it may seem—positively shy."

Katie kept her eyes bent upon the ground, but there was a world of emotion in her face.

"Mr. Deverell, do you think you attribute my constraint to the right cause? Have you never given me ground for it?"

"Not that I remember, on my honor. If I have, will you tell me in what way?"

"No, I would rather not."

"But, surely, if I have inadvertently annoyed you, you will at least do me the justice to believe it *was* inadvertence, and will give me the chance of setting myself right."

"It cannot matter to you very much, one way or the other."

"But indeed it does. Your refusal will pain me more than—more than you perhaps imagine."

"I should be very sorry to give you pain," she said, softly, with her eyes still bent down.

"Then you will tell me?"

"Since you press it, I will, for I always like to be straightforward. Do you remember that day when we first rode together in the Park?"

"Perfectly: I am not likely to forget it."

"Before I tell you what you want to know, I must refer to my own feeling on that occasion. You remember we had met before. We had been so happy as children on that one day we spent together, that I felt quite a child's delight in meeting you again. I thought——"

She stopped abruptly, and bent her head still lower.

"Well?" said Deverell, anxiously.

"I thought perhaps—but the thought was a very silly one—that you might have felt the same pleasure in meeting me again."

"I told you I did. I distinctly remember my telling you so."

"You told me so with your lips, but the truth was, Mr. Deverell, your manner changed to me from the moment you heard my name. I am not surprised. It was but natural, and I was to some extent prepared for it, but——"

"I was a dolt, an idiot, a conceited coxcomb," broke in Arthur. "But you still do me an injustice. The feeling did not last an hour. You must remember that it came upon me as such a sudden surprise. Your look, tone, manner, made me think that you were a person of the very best position. I did not know then—how could I?—that you had qualities of mind and heart which placed you far above the accident of humble birth. Surely I have made ample amends for my folly since?"

"But that is just the point. You never have been really cordial to me since. I am very sensitive, and I can assure you it has pained me much, though I never thought to confess it."

"But I have told you the true cause. On my honor, from that first evening I spent in your society, I have kept aloof entirely from a sense of my own inferiority. Will you not believe me?"

"I must believe you, but it was a very foolish feeling,—especially with me. You must see that I could make no advances while I was under that impression, and you do not know how humble I am myself,—how prone I am to that most painful of all feelings, self-depreciation."

"You! with a thousand worshipers at your feet,—with a mind that all must envy?"

"Oh, Mr. Deverell! you only pain me by talking in that way. The kindness of your uncle and aunt put me in the way of picking up a certain amount of superficial knowledge,—a smattering of languages, a little music, and a vague knowledge of art. Believe me, there is little real knowledge in the slang of art which falls so glibly from the lips of those who have spent a large portion of their lives among the great masters. To have done one really great or good action, to have made some solid sacrifice for the good of mankind, would be worth all the accomplishments I possess a thousand times over."

Arthur turned upon her a look of admiration so intense that it was well she did not encounter it just then.

"It is a comfort, any way, that you don't think me an absolute dolt. They say confession is good for the soul. Perhaps we shall get on better after this."

"I hope so. It will be a great pleasure to me if we do. If you still think I do not appreciate you, I will tell you plainly what I should have before thought it great presumption in me to express. I think you have a great many noble qualities. You are very honorable, brave, and strong. You would shine quite as much as my dilettante friends whom you profess to envy—though even now I can hardly think you

serious—if you only had the opportunity of judging for yourself; and that opportunity you will have very soon, for you will go abroad with us, will you not?”

“I had made up my mind not to do so, but this *tête-à-tête*—the first real one we have had—has wrought a marvelous change in me. I assure you I feel as if a load were taken off my mind. I shall be delighted to go now, and shall get you to be my teacher.”

Somehow the world seemed sunnier to both of them after they had thus unburdened their hearts. If Arthur had read Tennyson, he would have realized the feeling of Maud's lover:

“A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,  
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.”

Probably they neither of them yet knew their own hearts; still, they each experienced an indefinable happiness in the other's society; and, as they pursued their way slowly down the sweet Devonshire lane, not for one moment did they envy Val or Sir Harry the triumphs which they had probably ere now achieved.

They reached a point where the road forked; the one to the right leading down towards a wood, which lay in the valley.

Katie checked her horse, and gazed round her for a moment. Her companion stopped also.

“What are you thinking about?” he asked, noticing her wistful expression.

“Oh, don't you see? Surely you must remember this lane. How familiar it looks! It leads down to my dear father's cottage.”

It was indeed the turn of the road near the linhay, which has been mentioned in the opening chapter of this story. Arthur remembered the spot too. He had ridden past it often in former years.

"What would you wish to do?" he asked, partly reading her thoughts.

"I should so like to go there. Would it be troubling you very much?"

"You must know I should not consider it a trouble, if you wish it. But it will awaken sad recollections."

"Not altogether; those were very happy days,—my dear father was so good to me. I could not expect them to last forever."

They turned into the winding lane, and pursued their way in silence through the copse to the gate of the cottage. The flowers were still bright in the garden, and some rosy-cheeked children were playing in the long grass which lay between the garden and the wood. They stared in half-frightened amazement at the beautiful lady and the tall gentleman on horseback who had so suddenly appeared on the scene, and one, the eldest, ran quickly across the garden into the cottage.

What a change since Arthur had come to the cottage, on that bright spring morning, years ago! What a change, especially to Katie! The transformation from the little country girl to the accomplished, fashionable beauty, who had seen half the London world at her feet! Happily, her prosperity had not changed her heart. Though her path had been one of roses, almost without a thorn, her heart still yearned to the quiet cottage home and the memory of the happy days she had passed in it with her supposed father. She turned away her face, to hide the tears that *would* force their way at the remembrance.

An honest-looking woman came to the door, and stared at them inquiringly.

"I wonder if she would mind our coming in," said Katie. "I should so like to see the dear little room again, where I used to sit and work and sing the whole day long. There is the same honeysuckle round the window, now."



"So should I," answered Arthur. "It was there I had that jolly meal,—the delicious cream and honey. Yonder is the very stump upon which I sat when you brought me the cider, Katie!"

He had never called her by her Christian name before, though their early intimacy, and the position she occupied in his uncle's house, would have warranted it. She turned quickly at the sound, and he went on.

"Katie, there ought to be a very strong bond between your heart and mine. We will never let estrangement come between us again, will we?"

"Never, if I can help it," she said.

Her head was bent down, and the words came falteringly. Was it beginning to dawn upon her that the feeling which had never quite left her heart since the day when they met here before was now reciprocated? She did not shape the thought to herself even yet. It was only an indefinite sensation trembling across her mind,—the first tender sensation of love, as tremulous as the dewdrop on the rose.

The woman advanced to the gate, and asked what they might please to want.

"Would you allow us to come into your cottage?" said Arthur. "We both knew it well many years ago, and should be so much obliged if you will."

"Ees, sure, ef so be it will give 'ee any pleasure; but you must plaze to 'scuse its being a bit untidy. 'Tes one body's work to kip it nate, with such a parcel of children about."

Katie assured her that it did not in the least matter, and into the old familiar room they went, leaving the horses in charge of a sturdy boy, who had been captured from behind the cottage. Then Katie took off her hat, and the good woman brought her some refreshing new milk, while Arthur indulged in a jug of his favorite cider. They had a long chat with the gamekeeper's wife, touching her husband (who now

occupied Jim Price's post) and her numerous family, and left some substantial tokens of their visit, in the shape of sundry sixpences and shillings, in the hands of the wondering brats, who had never gazed on such El Dorados before.

Then, with a hearty shaking of hands all round, they remounted their horses, and, taking a narrow track through the wood, passed onward towards the Towers.

The foliage deepened around them as they went. The long boughs drooped and swept at times so low that Arthur had to hold them aside for his companion to pass. At such times he gazed into her sweet face, flushed with the exercise of the day and with the indefinable happiness within her heart; and, gazing thus, an irresistible yearning came upon him.

In the midst of the thickest grove he checked his horse, and laid his hand upon his companion's rein. Then he took her small hand in his.

"Katie, you don't know how much I love you,—how much I have loved you for these three months past. I never till to-day dared to speak, because I thought there was no hope for me; but I know you better, now. My darling! dare I *hope* that you can love me in return?"

It shaped itself now,—that vague, indefinite delight which had been circling round her heart. She knew it was love,—mutual, unalterable love. His words thrilled her with a joy more intense than she had thought it possible the world could give, and her answer is not hard to guess.

## CHAPTER X.

## SIX YEARS.

WE have hitherto had but brief glimpses of the early years of Katie and young Deverell. The events of their maturer years are of deeper significance, and demand a more detailed narration.

Katie had experienced a rude awakening from that dream of early love which enwrapped her when we saw her last. In spite of the affection with which both the baronet and his wife regarded her, their pride of birth rose straight up on end at the thought of Arthur's marriage with a gamekeeper's daughter.

The proposition met with a firm, emphatic refusal. In spite of the good nature which he almost invariably displayed towards those with whom he was brought into contact, Sir Robert Deverell was a proud man at heart. When he contemplated the proposed *mésalliance* of his nephew, he could not but remember that in all human probability the said nephew would ere long be the sole representative of a race whose name was illustrious when the finest oaks in his broad park were little more than saplings. Robert Deverell, companion-in-arms of the Conqueror himself, had been knighted on the field of battle when Saxon Harold lay stricken with the death-wound in his eye. The knight smiled a quiet smile beneath his visor when the giant Norman's sword touched his cunningly-wrought coat of mail; for knighthood was of small moment to him who, albeit of a younger branch of the ancient house, could trace his lineage back to Charlemagne himself.

The shouts of victory in his ear, and the good red blood upon his trusty blade, were *his* reward. Nevertheless, he accepted his new honors meekly, and, by means of a goodly slice of the portioned spoils which followed that great fight of Hastings, he founded a name in England which was coupled with renown in many an after-reign, and perpetuated a heritage of wealth and pride and probity down to its present possessor.

It was little likely, therefore, that the present representative of this ancient race could be brought to entertain for a single moment the thought of such a marriage. Lady Deverell, who had scarcely less blue blood in her veins than her husband, was, if possible, more decided in her opposition than he was; but, almost before they had begun to reflect upon the best means to adopt to put an end to the affair, they received an unexpected ally in the person of Katie herself. Almost in the same hour that Arthur had confessed his love for her she had foreseen the consequences. She felt how closely she was bound by every tie of gratitude to Lady Deverell. To inflict on her kind benefactress a moment's pain she felt would be utter baseness on her part. She told Arthur what her feeling was. She entreated him to leave her, and never to recur to the topic again. She knew that she was sacrificing the dearest happiness the world could bring in relinquishing him, but she knew also that it was a sacrifice which duty imperatively demanded, and she nerved herself to the task. Poor Katie! It was a brief dream of happiness that sunny day in the Devonshire lanes, the ride home through the woods, the confession of mutual love. She would not have had those words unsaid for a kingdom; but, for all that, when she began to reflect, she had sufficient strength of mind to bind Arthur to a promise that he would never again return to the subject unless he could first obtain the consent of his uncle and aunt, and this her heart told her was tantamount to putting away hope forever.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Katie," Arthur said, when this proposition was made. "If you'll consent to my going abroad with you, I'll not recur to the topic again for three months. In the mean time, we can only hope that my uncle and aunt will change their minds when they see we are in earnest. If I bothered them now, and there was anything like a split, it is quite certain I could not go with you to Italy, and my education could not commence."

It was weak temporizing, but Katie would have been more than mortal had she refused. All she insisted on was the fulfillment of Arthur's promise that they should be nothing more than friends, so that there should be no deception practiced towards Sir Robert and Lady Deverell; and to this Arthur, who was the soul of honor, conscientiously adhered.

So the Italian trip was undertaken, and the lovers, for such they were in heart, enjoyed all the sweets of constant companionship in that wondrous land of poetry and romance. Before, however, the term of probation imposed by Katie had expired, the true state of things gradually dawned upon the phlegmatic nature of Lady Deverell. She mentioned her suspicions to her husband, and suspicion once aroused it was not difficult to discern the truth. Sir Robert went to the point at once, and questioned Arthur on the subject. Arthur, to whom lying and equivocation were things unknown, confessed the true state of the case, and a scene followed such as the placid baronet had never been an actor in before. Her ladyship was summoned to add her remonstrances to those of the baronet, but the young man would not yield an inch. In the midst of the commotion, Katie, who with a trembling heart recognized the cause of the disturbance, herself appeared on the scene. Pride and affection were waging terrible war with each other in the minds of the old people, but Katie at once calmed the turmoil by declaring that nothing should induce her to oppose their wishes, and by entreating Arthur to leave them and

return to England. Katie was so firm in her resolve, although her heart was wellnigh breaking, that there was nothing left for Arthur but to yield, and so their days of happiness came suddenly to an end.

But the sunlight died out of Katie's life, and the old couple saw it. Rumors came to them also of the fearfully reckless life Arthur was leading at home. Sir Robert, though not stingy, was a careful man. He had always lived well within his income. The notion of debt or reckless living—and it had been made known to him that his nephew was plunging habitually into both—was in the last degree distasteful to him. He summoned his wife to a consultation and laid the circumstances before her. Their pretty flower, who had been a source to them of such constant happiness, was fading visibly; their nephew, in whom all their hopes of the future of the family were centred, was going to the dogs as fast as he could go. A word from them would in all probability set all these things right, and, after another brief but sharp struggle with the old demon Pride, they sent for Arthur and made known their resolve.

It was to this effect. They could never, they said, be brought to give an unqualified consent to the match, but if at the end of two years the young couple remained in the same mind they would no longer oppose their union.

The lovers did remain in the same mind, and at the end of the time specified they were married.

Six years had passed since that time, years of unalloyed happiness to Arthur and his bride, but still fraught with many sad changes. The worthy baronet and his wife had both passed away, dying within three months of each other: whether their end was hastened by a feeling of annoyance that they had not been able to prevent the marriage, or by the loss of Katie, is not known, but they were never quite the same after. Arthur reigned in the home of his ancestors,

dispensing a princely hospitality which rivaled the most open-handed of his forefathers of old. A new life had opened to him when he first visited Italy in company with her whom he had loved so long and so well ; his mind rapidly expanded to the influence of the clime and its associations. He acquired a love of the beautiful in art, which led him to pursue it with the same avidity he had formerly displayed in pursuit of sport. His taste became renowned,—perfected, possibly, by the clear, discerning mind which was ever by his side. In pictures, sculpture, and china, he was as great an authority as he still was in horses, dogs, and wine. Among virtuosi he was no longer silent as of yore ; he could hold his own with the best ; and he pursued his varied tastes with an ardor and an indifference to cost which was alarming even with the knowledge of the splendid rent-roll pertaining to the estates of Norton.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### MIDNIGHT COLLOQUIES.

THE billiard-room at Norton Towers was unique. I say nothing of the matchless “Burroughes and Watts” which occupied the centre of the room, with its cloth like rich satin, and cushions from which the balls flew off with a motion as swift and noiseless as a swallow on the wing. It was the surroundings which at once caught the eye and made one wish to linger there and spend a quiet hour or two in a closer inspection of the rare objects scattered on every side.

No straight, stiff leather seats disfigured the sides of the room. Those who watched the game, while inhaling the

choicest brands of Havana or the fragrant leaves of the East, lounged upon couches elaborately carved in oak and cushioned with maroon velvet, which stood out in tasteful contrast to the olive-green wall, picked out with an arabesque of black and gold. Here and there, at a safe distance from the cues of the players, and backed by canopies of the same maroon velvet, were exquisite specimens of the sculptor's art,—a Venus from the hand of Canova, a Nymph by Gibson, or a laughing Bacchante from the facile chisel of Neucini. Vases of Satsuma and Cloisonnée enamel, with their exquisite tracery and harmonious tints, filled the interspaces between the furniture and the statues. Japanese bronzes, bedight with scaly monsters, —marvels of intricate workmanship,—decorated the mantel-piece and oak window-ledges.

At the end of the room farthest from the table, two pillars, of polished serpentine from the Lizard coast, flanked a recess, wherein stood a cabinet stored with some choice specimens of pottery, ranging from the quaint, unsightly Chinese ware to the voluptuous grace of the products of Dresden and Sèvres. Grouped tastefully in the other recesses were collections of strange weapons from the Indian seas, bows, kreeces, yata-ghans, spears with jagged, murderous points, and tomahawks from the region of the implacable Sioux and warlike Comanche. Relics of the chase, too, were in their appointed places overhead,—heads of stags from the Highlands, of boars from the forests of Germany, and dominant over all a black, shaggy, demoniacal head of a bison from the prairies of the Saskatchewan.

Last, though, in the eyes of many frequenters of the room, not least, around the mantel-piece was arranged a wondrous collection of implements for the enjoyment of the fragrant weed,—calumets of ruddy clay from the wigwam of the red Indian, nargilehs from the Mediterranean, hookahs, jeweled and silver-mounted, from the luxurious East, and meerschaums



with their creamy whiteness tinted to a Vandyke brown to suit the utilitarian views of the modern smoker.

A large group by Titian, so rich in tone that it formed a key-note to the harmonious arrangement of the room, hung on the wall opposite the serpentine pillars. Two or three specimens of Greuze—ill drawn, but ravishingly sweet and soft—peeped out from the recesses on either side the pillars. Above the mantel-piece were scattered some pictorial gems by Meissonier, which flanked a grand Velasquez-looking Spanish noble, by that modern magician of the pencil, John Philip.

Whatever credit accrued from the collection of these varied objects was due to Sir Arthur himself, who now stood, cue in hand, talking to his steward and confidential adviser, Mr. Percival Keith.

Arthur was much changed since that happy morning when he rode down the Devonshire lane with Katie. The freshness of youth had passed. Contact with the world and its crooked ways had exercised the same hardening influence upon him that it does upon most of us. Possibly, also, the responsibilities of his altered position, now that he had succeeded to the baronetcy, may have had an influence.

There was a suspicion of coldness in his manner, possibly a more lofty bearing in his intercourse with others, and at times a reticence which comes to many in middle life,—an intermediate calm between the garrulousness of childhood and old age. The generous, truthful, straightforward nature, however, was the same, but its outer casing was somewhat hardened by time and contact with the world.

"You must go, Keith?" he said.

"Yes. It's close upon eleven o'clock, and I've a long drive before me."

"You'd much better have stayed the night, as I advised. However, a willful man must have his way. Take another cigar, to smoke on the road."

"Thanks."

"You've quite done with me for the present? No more troublesome deeds to sign, nor anything of that sort?"

"No, Sir Arthur; I am not likely to trouble you again for some time."

"That's a comfort. If there is one thing I hate more than another, it is your long legal documents. Your stroke, I think, Sir John."

The person thus addressed was Admiral Sir John Bolt, of whom the reader has heard in the earlier portions of this story. He was a man of some sixty-five years, the greater part of which had been spent in arduous service, which added some years to his appearance. Few among those who have gained honored names in the ardent search for a lost compatriot, or in the pursuit of science among the eternal frosts of the north, had achieved greater fame than Sir John. Twice had he been frozen up in the long, dead, winter nights of those silent regions round the yet unconquered Pole, where winter—mightiest of engineers—bridges continents together with leagues of unsullied ice and chains the ocean-currents with an iron grasp.

Sir John was resting from his labors now. He and Sir Arthur's father had been fast friends, and he had a warm affection for his old friend's son, to whom he was now paying a long visit.

The third person in the room, Mr. Percival Keith, is unknown to the reader. He was a keen business-man, somewhat plebeian in aspect, of short stature, and with a face wherein it was utterly impossible to detect the faintest indication of what lay beneath the surface. Keith was a sort of hereditary appendage of the property, and had for years known more about its numerous details than the owners themselves.

The game was a hundred up. Sir Arthur's score stood at ninety-seven. The admiral was some twenty behind. Keith,

with the indifference of a man who does not play, had chosen this inopportune moment to say good-night.

Deverell shook hands with him. The admiral was regarding the marking-board attentively.

"The game's up," he said. "You only want three to win."

"Good-night, Keith," said Deverell, oblivious to the remark of his old friend. "Take care of yourself, and a pleasant drive to you."

"Thanks, Sir Arthur. Good-night," Keith said, as he went towards the door, passing Sir John on his way. "Good-night, Sir John," he added.

The sturdy admiral was still busily inspecting the intricacies of the marking-board, and took no heed.

Keith looked at him for a moment in some surprise, then gave a half-smile, nodded to Sir Arthur, passed the doorway, and was gone.

"Your stroke, Sir John," said the baronet.

"It's no use: I can't score, I know; and you only want three to win," repeated the admiral. He took especial pains with the stroke nevertheless. Failure had all his life been an unknown word in his vocabulary. The palsied arm, however, will come with age, and a sudden and ill-timed twitch sent the old sailor's ball flying off the table, with his adversary's ball in a pocket.

"Hard luck! You've given me the game, after all," said the baronet, pocketing his ball off the red.

"Hang me if I ever touch a cue again," said the admiral, with visible chagrin. "We old fellows never know when to stop. We think we can do things at seventy which would have puzzled us at thirty-five."

"You should take odds."

"Never took odds in my life; and I don't mean to begin now."

"Have a cigar, then, and take the easy-chair: we won't go to bed yet. There,—I think that will suit you."

Sir Arthur wheeled a capacious chair round to the fire, and selected a cigar from his case. Sir John settled himself in the chair and took the cigar, which he held critically to his nose.

"Not bad, I confess,—ruinous price, as usual, I suppose,—puffing away gold, if the truth were known."

"That's a secondary consideration, if they please my friends," was the quiet reply.

"It always is with you. What do you get from your friends in exchange?"

"The pleasure of their society,—yours, for example."

"Ugh! Well, I hope you won't live to repent it."

"I hope not; I've no reason to think so."

The baronet took up a cue and began knocking the balls about as he talked. Sir John lighted his cigar and sat back in his easy-chair with an evident enjoyment of the exquisite aroma which was exhaled from the high-priced cabana.

"By the way, I've bought Nugent's stud," the baronet continued, without pausing in his strokes.

The admiral turned quickly in his chair and took the cigar from his lips.

"What! the whole lot?" he exclaimed.

"Every single item,—horses, yearlings, foals, brood-mares, paddocks and all, and taken over the stud grooms. By Jove!" he exclaimed, as his ball flew off the red at a difficult angle and went straight into a pocket, "I've done it at last: I've tried that stroke all my life and never succeeded before."

The admiral was oblivious to the balls. "Upon my soul, Arthur," he said, in a grave tone, "your extravagance is enough to make a poor man's hair stand on end. Was Nugent hard up?"

"At his last gasp, I believe. Between ourselves, there

were certain racing-debts not paid up, and matters would have looked ugly if he hadn't realized quickly. I didn't particularly care about the lot, but I like Nugent, and I knew it was doing him a good turn."

"A man that stepped into a fortune fit for a duke," said the admiral, musingly. "He ought to be sent to a lunatic-asylum. You'll be in the same scrape yourself, Arthur, if you don't look sharp," he added, after a pause.

"Not I," rejoined Sir Arthur, laughing; "Keith looks too closely after my concerns."

"A *great deal* too closely," rejoined the admiral, significantly.

"How do you mean?" inquired Sir Arthur, leaning over his cue and preparing for another stroke.

"How do I mean?" repeated the old man. "I mean that you put a deuced deal too much faith in Keith."

Sir Arthur paused on his stroke in utter amazement, and looked up.

"Too much faith in Keith?" he exclaimed. "Why, I'd as soon mistrust myself as Keith."

The old man went on in a determined voice. "All very fine, sir. I've known you ever since you were a boy, and I consider myself privileged to speak: I tell you you've too much confidence in Keith. Do you ever look into an account?"

The baronet put down his cue, and, coming round to the fire, stood with his back against the mantel-piece.

"Never," he replied, in a tone which implied a perfect contentment with the omission.

"Nor read a paper?"

"Never. I signed two yesterday without even looking at their contents."

The admiral brought his clinched fist down on the arm of his chair with a thump.

"Then hang me, Arthur, if you don't deserve to be swindled," he said, angrily.

"Look here, Sir John," replied the other, quietly, but with a touch of irony in his voice. "With me there are no degrees of confidence: it must be unlimited. If I suspected a man I wouldn't keep him in my employ a day. Suspicion demoralizes."

"And over-confidence breeds deceit."

"Not if people are honest at heart."

"How many are? Not one in a thousand."

"That's your worldly view of things,—the cold calculating theory of age."

"Born of the mistaken enthusiasm of youth," said the admiral, firing the last shot.

Sir Arthur was unconvinced, though he retired gracefully, out of deference to his father's old friend, who was waxing warm.

"Well, have it so if you like," he said. "Let me give you some seltzer and brandy."

He brought some of the sparkling mixture from a side-table, and placed it beside the old knight. The latter sat looking musingly into the fire, with an occasional quick puff of smoke coming from his lips, compact and round as the smoke from one of his own guns.

"I only hope your wife will keep you straight," he said, at length; "you turned up trumps there, at any rate."

Sir Arthur could not resist the return shot.

"So much for the mistaken enthusiasm of youth, Sir John," he said, slyly.

The admiral gave a jerk, as if struck amidships.

"Umph! you had me there, I confess, but I forgive you for the sake of your wife. She is certainly next door to an angel. You must absolutely worship her."

"Yes, we get on very well together," was the impassive rejoinder.

"Good God!" exclaimed the knight, "is that all you have to say about her?"

"What more should I say?" asked Sir Arthur, quietly lighting a cigar.

His friend stared at him for a full half-minute, in amazement.

"What do you think of your new mare?" he at length asked.

"What has that got to do with it?"

"I ask you what you think of her."

"Think! I think her perfect,—a shoulder like a fortress, legs a pattern of strength and symmetry, paces like a fawn, and an eye like Juno——"

"Exactly," broke in the knight. "You go into raptures about your mare, but you haven't ten words to say about your wife, who is as near perfection as it's possible for a woman to be. Hang me if I don't believe you young men think more about your horses than you do about your wives."

The baronet gave a dry laugh, and sent the smoke out from between his lips in a long thin stream.

"Confound it, Sir John," he said, "you wouldn't have me run over my wife's points as I do those of a hunter, would you? No, no, I don't wear my heart upon my sleeve,—if you mean that; but my wife understands me well enough."

"Upon my soul I hope she does," was the rejoinder; "for, much as I hate women in general,—thank heaven, we escaped them in the Arctic regions,—I must say your wife has fairly won my heart. A more beautiful creature I never knew, nor a sweeter disposition. I was a fool for objecting to the match," he added; "so was your uncle; but he never would if he could have seen her as she is now. As it was, I believe it half killed him."

"Ah," said Sir Arthur, settling himself in an easy-chair, opposite Sir John, "it was a sad blow to the old man, my marrying a keeper's daughter; the only taint in the blood of the Deverells, he used to call it. Hush; here she is!"

Katie entered the room as he spoke. The intervening years had made less change in her than in her husband. With the exception of a slight additional roundness of form and a more matronly expression, she was almost the same as on the day when Arthur had first encountered her at Rutland Gate. There was the same grace in her movements, the same fascination of voice and manner, which had belonged to her in former days. Men still bowed down and worshiped her as of old, and even her own sex were scarcely less attracted by the winning charm of her manner.

"What! up at this hour, Katie?" said her husband. "I thought you were in bed ages ago."

"No: I have been writing. My only chance of getting through my correspondence is when my visitors are in bed. I am still sadly in arrear. But I came to send you two to bed," she added. "It is too bad of you to keep Sir John up so late, Arty. He's dreadfully naughty about sitting up, Sir John. What a smoky atmosphere! Do let me give you some air."

Arthur's love for his wife had, if anything, increased with years. A feeling akin to devotion was in his mind as his eyes followed her lovingly to the window towards which she now moved. She drew aside the curtain and threw open the window, which opened lattice-wise. A full flood of moonlight poured into the room and bathed her in a silver glory.

"You'll catch a confounded cold if you don't mind," growled the admiral.

"No fear of that," she rejoined,—“thanks to my bringing up.”

She leaned out of the window. "What a lovely night!" she said, musingly, as she gazed on the canopy above, crowded with glittering stars.

"Good-night, Arthur," said the admiral, rising. "I don't want to catch lumbago."



Lady Deverell laughed a little silver laugh, like a stream which encounters a pebble and ripples over it.

"Oh, do come and look at the moon, Sir John," she cried.

"No, thank you, my lady. The moon seems to have ~~go~~ on remarkably well without me so far. The moon is ~~stil~~ vigorous; I'm not. The moon doesn't get lumbago; I ~~do~~ The moon sleeps all day; I don't: therefore I like to ~~sleep~~ at night. I leave the moon to you: she can't be in better hands. Good-night."

The admiral took his candle and retired.

"Dear old man," said Sir Arthur, musing, "he's ~~had~~ enough of moonlight in the Polar seas to last a lifetime. You know, Katie, he was one of the great Arctic explorers,—~~he~~ and my father. What! in a reverie?" he continued, seeing ~~that~~ that his wife took no heed.

He rose, and, advancing quietly to the window, passed his arm round her waist.

They were silent for a few moments.

"Isn't the light on the lake lovely?" she said.

"Yes," he replied; "but moonlight is a sad light at the best,—like a happy smile on the face of Death."

"Arthur, what is the matter with you?"

She detected something in his face in a moment, and gazed at him earnestly.

"I don't know," he replied. "Somehow as I looked at that light a gloomy foreboding of evil came over me."

He returned to his seat by the fire. She stood looking at him anxiously.

"Katie, come here," he said.

She was at his side in a moment, and rested her hands on his shoulder.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"Sit there," he said, pointing to a foot-stool at his feet.

She placed herself at once where he indicated, with her hands resting on his knees.

"Well?" she said, looking up inquiringly.

He paused a moment, and then said,—

"Katie, do you think I love you?"

Her eyes opened in mute surprise.

"How can you ask me, Arthur? What should I be if I did not feel sure of your love?"

"And yet they say I don't appreciate you."

"Who says so?" she inquired, with increasing surprise.

"Well, Sir John, for one."

"That is because you are too proud to let out your heart before people."

"You think me proud?"

"Don't I know you are? I don't love you less for that. It is the heritage of the Deverells; you are proud in spite of yourself. I like to think it, for it tells me how much you must have loved ever to think of making me your wife."

Sir Arthur passed his hand lovingly down the rich tress of hair which escaped from its coil and fell in graceful waves on to her shoulder.

"A less proud man might not have done so," he said.

"True pride abhors meanness. Having won your love, pride forbade my doing a dishonorable act. The blood of the old Crusader—the first Sir Arthur—which flows in my veins, makes me feel that I would rather die than disgrace the old stock. Do you know the story of that first Sir Arthur, darling?"

"No."

"He was a man of indomitable courage and iron will, the equal of Cœur de Lion himself. He was reported to have been killed in the East, but he suddenly reappeared in England, and found his wife, who had believed him dead, betrothed to a rich man of ignoble birth. It is said she was

reduced to poverty, and had done it to save her child. Be that as it may, the old Crusader struck her dead at his feet, left the country, and died fighting against the Saracens. To the last hour he was known as Deverell of the Broken Heart."

Lady Deverell had withdrawn slightly from her recumbent posture, and sat with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"It was a cruel deed," she said; "I should not like you to inherit such a nature, Arthur."

"No, darling," he replied, in a lighter tone. "Besides, modern civilization has tamed down our natural ferocity somewhat. Emotion is not respectable in these days; but, even loving you as I do, darling, I still feel if you were guilty of a single act which would bring a blush of shame to the brow, I could never look upon your face again."

Lady Deverell looked up in sudden surprise. "Oh, Arty, do not imagine such a thing," she said, in a tone half of indignation, half of entreaty.

"I do not," he replied, quickly; "I know it is impossible. Have I not proved your worth a thousand times? How happy I am in your love!"

"And yet you look sad. What is the meaning of this gloom?"

"I cannot tell: it is unaccountable."

"Come, let me weave what you used to call the magic circle about you," she said, half rising, and throwing her arms about her husband's neck. He took her face between his hands, looking straight into her eyes.

"You are indeed an enchantress," he said, fondly. "How beautiful you are, my darling. It is little wonder that Arthur Deverell's wife is renowned through all the country side for goodness and beauty. There is no one like you in all the world, Katie."

She clung to him still more closely, but she said, archly,

"Flatterer! so, after all, it was only pride made you marry me."

"I'm half inclined to retort and say 'yes,' if you will have it so. In truth, though," he added, "Love went hand in hand with Pride in our case. I would not have lost you for a realm."

He stooped and pressed a long loving kiss on her forehead.

"Oh, Arty," she sighed, in excess of joy, "was ever wife so happy as I?"

The moonlight streamed in upon them as they sat, rapt in the intense fervor of perfect unchanging love; and, to all outward seeming, care was as far distant as the stars which strewed, as with flowers, the pathway of the midnight queen.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

### ON THE TERRACE.

THE Italian proverb *Vedi Napoli e poi muori* might well be applied, with a simple change of name, to the view from the terrace at Norton. The old mansion, with its two flanking towers,—somewhat apart from the main body of the building, which was of later date,—stood on an elevated ridge overlooking a wealth of park and wood and meadow-land beyond; far beyond, indeed, for the park stretched away for a mile or more from the mansion, and was bounded by a belt of oak forest, rich in the tints of autumn, which fell in wave-like undulations into a deep rocky valley, in whose lowest depths the stream—which we remember in connection with the early days of our hero—foamed and tumbled amid a labyrinth of rock and tangled undergrowth, and sent its "tender curving

lines of creamy foam" still farther down to the estuary of the English Channel, which bounded the view to the south.

Beneath the ancestral oaks—the youngest of which had braved the storms of many centuries—innumerable deer browse amid the bracken which garnishes with gold the boles of mighty trees. It is morning, and the air is so calm that the autumn mists still hang about the valleys, softening the distant outlines, and marking the course of the stream where it lies hidden by the woods. The sky—intensely blue, in contrast to the red sandstone soil, so marked a feature of beautiful Devon—is literally without a cloud. So still is the air that clouds of gnats disport themselves above the shining meads, where the deer have left their tracks in the grass from which the dew has been brushed by their passing feet; and the stream a mile and a half away sends up a low, continuous murmur through the sunny air.

He who looked on such a scene and could call it his own might be pardoned for indulging in the pride of possession, and must needs look back with gratitude to those brave hearts of old whose gallant deeds earned for him so fair an abiding-place.

The cold discomfort of newness was a thing unknown at Norton Towers. All was well kept, but the mellowing hand of time had toned down everything, from the quaint oak chairs in the hall to the old gray steps, covered with ivy, which led from the terrace to the lower garden-walks. This terrace ran the whole length of the mansion on the south side, and, though the season was growing late, its stone balustrades and vases were still wreathed with a wealth of roses which shed a delicious fragrance far around.

Two mornings after the close of my last chapter, a goodly company was seated on this terrace, enjoying the exquisite view and the almost summer sunshine, while they indulged in a conversation so brimming over with wit that it seemed born of the bright air itself.

In the centre of this group, seated on an ivy-covered bench of curiously carved stone, was Lady Deverell,—always the leading attraction, from her unrivaled beauty and the winning grace of her manner, in whatever company she might be placed. Seated near her hostess was our old acquaintance of the hunting-field, Miss Vereker, now one of the richest heiresses in England, whose wealth was a sort of deadly nightshade to her, poisoning, by the deceit it exposed, the deep undercurrent of generosity in a really noble nature, making her days wretched with perpetual tales of woe, her nights sleepless with the thought that possibly she had misjudged some whining hypocrite, who, like a thousand other harpies, would have set upon her and devoured up all her substance in a month if they had the chance.

She could hardly be called handsome, but a certain quiet earnestness of expression in her face made many think her so. The wealth she had inherited brought her flattery in sickening profusion, and flattery she hated. Of men she was suspicious. She knew that they loved gold, and she doubted their disinterestedness. Gladly would she have set aside her wealth; but she was strictly conscientious, and she could not reconcile to her conscience the thought of putting aside the responsibilities her fortune entailed.

The rest of the group on the terrace was made up by four others: Blanche Somers, a pretty, light-hearted girl of eighteen; our old friend Val Poingdestre, unaltered, save for the presence of a few gray hairs; Clement Boyd, R.A., the most popular portrait-painter of the day, though not yet eight-and-twenty; and our friend of two nights ago, Sir John Bolt, who, sitting somewhat apart from the rest, was making strenuous efforts to read the newly-arrived paper, though not altogether able to avoid listening to the conversation, which, like the outbreak of many waters, flowed on around him.

"So the earl was left out in the cold," said Val Poing-

destre, interposing his six feet of substantial flesh and blood between Miss Vereker and the distant view, and looking straight at her, though his words were addressed to his hostess.

"Yes," said the latter, "and the poet won the lady and all her lands."

"Very pretty in fiction, but not probable in fact," struck in Mr. Boyd.

"Why not?" asked Lady Deverell, turning quickly.

"Because money, not merit, wins nowadays," quoth the artist.

"Rank heresy, Mr. Boyd," said Lady Deverell, with an earnestness which brought a flush to her face. "You should be the last person to utter such a libel on the age."

"Why, may I ask?"

"If I must be personal, is it money or merit that the world looks for in you?"

"Not much of the first, truly, and very little of the second, I'm afraid."

The lady warmed to the contest. "This from you," she said, "you, who have but to cover a few feet of canvas, to get a price which would have been an earl's ransom in days gone by; you, who have all the beauty and fashion of London in your tapestried galleries; you, who bask in the sunshine of royalty itself!"

The artist shrugged his shoulders, and put his hands in his pockets.

"Just because it's my luck to be the fashion. Another generation may consider my pictures mere daubs."

Bright-eyed Blanche Somers, who was seated beside Lady Deverell, looked slyly round.

"If they don't forget them altogether," she said.

The artist winced visibly.

"Thank you, Miss Somers," he said: "that is a more probable fate, since *you* condemn them."

"I condemn them!" echoed the light-hearted girl; "I admire them immensely." Then, with another wicked twinkle in her eye, she added, "But then, you see, I'm no judge."

Boyd turned away, biting his lip in evident vexation. Every word that fell from the lips of Blanche Somers moved him more than he chose to confess. Lady Deverell turned to her friend with a reproachful glance.

"Blanche, how can you be so unmerciful?" she said, in an undertone.

Blanche looked as if she thought she had gone too far, and so tried to laugh it off. "I do it for his good," she replied. "He would be awfully conceited if I didn't snub him now and then; and I hate a conceited man."

"Then I conclude you don't altogether hate Mr. Boyd."

"Not entirely. He might be driven to do something desperate, you know; and I don't wish to be morally responsible for a suicide, or anything of that sort."

All this was in too low a tone to be heard by the others. Val Poingdestre began to be impatient.

"What about the earl all this time?" he asked.

"Oh, the rhyme does not say," answered Lady Deverell.

"It only lets you know that Lady Geraldine married the poet," said Blanche.

Boyd, who had been leaning out over the terrace, suddenly turned.

"Perhaps the earl drowned himself," he said, in a tone of quiet sarcasm.

"Not likely," responded Val: "disappointed lovers take more to wine than to water."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Blanche. "Is there no romance left,—not even among poets and artists?"

Her looks were bent on Boyd, as she concluded the sentence. It devolved on him to reply. At that moment he would not have confessed to a grain of sentiment for a kingdom.



"No, Miss Somers, we have given up the cloak and slouched hat. We ride in the Row now, turned out by Poole, with a smart groom behind us, bless you."

Val broke into a loud laugh. "What a millennium for art," he said, "a ride in a straight road, under trimmed trees, with a fellow behind in tops and bright buttons! Is that the way to cultivate an eye for the picturesque?"

"No," said the artist, still dogged, "but it's the way to cultivate sitters; that's all we care about."

Blanche's conscience began to grow uneasy. Lady Deverell took up the ball.

"What would poor Correggio have said, toiling home in the burning sun under his load of copper?"

"Or Cimabue, as he followed his Virgin?" said Miss Vereker.

"Or Morland, as he painted his pigs?" said Blanche.

"Very much in liquor," quoth Val.

"Which? the pigs or the painter?" asked Boyd.

"Both," answered Val. "You're a bad lot."

"What are you all talking about?" cried Sir Arthur, suddenly appearing on the scene.

"Lady Geraldine," replied his wife.

"Oh, then you've heard?" said Sir Arthur.

"Heard what?" was the general exclamation.

"That she's dead lame?" replied the baronet.

"Who?" inquired Val.

"Why, Lady Geraldine: you said you were all talking about her."

"Bless your innocent heart," said Val, "they're miles away in the clouds of poesy. They're talking of Mrs. Barrett Browning's heroine,—not your new mare."

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," answered the baronet. "I must apologize for bringing you back to earth. However, *my* Lady Geraldine has got a twist in her near fore leg. Val, you rode her yesterday, you must be the culprit."

Val put on an injured air, which had something in it irresistibly comic.

"If you will put me on the top of a mare that flies a Devonshire hedge instead of topping it, what can you expect?" he said. "I consider myself lucky to have saved my neck. The mare breasted the last unexpectedly by way of variety, and I went over in advance of my steed, like a middle-aged Mercury in full flight. It was remarkably pretty to look at, but not so pleasant to perform."

"Why, you never said a word about it," struck in Sir Arthur.

"No," replied Val. "I always think these things better suppressed. I stood on my head on the other side for a moment,—very much to the detriment of my hat,—and then came down gracefully on my back. The mare came over after me to see what was up. She dropped with her foot in a rut, but I didn't fancy she was hurt: she went right enough afterwards."

"Why, how came you to have all this performance to yourself?" asked Sir Arthur, in surprise.

"Because I like to go straight," answered Val. "It often gets one into difficulties, though: don't you think so, Miss Vereker?"

"Possibly," answered that lady, coming away from a distant sea-line, but looking in no way interested in the question, which was evidently intended to recall her from her self-abstraction and indifference.

"I've a proposition to make to you," said Sir Arthur.

"How delightful!" cried Blanche. "I'm sure, by your face, it's something nice. What is it?"

"What do you say to a trip to Denham Chase? The autumn tints will be splendid just now."

"Do you mean to-day, Arthur?" asked Lady Deverell.

"At once, if you all approve."

"I'll answer for everybody," cried Blanche. "I'm sure it will be charming. I was dying for something to do. Every one is so stupid this morning."

"Let us start at once, then," said Sir Arthur. "Those who like to ride can have a mount; those who prefer driving can go in the wagonette."

Boyd, in the general move, had found himself by the side of Blanche, a little apart from the rest.

"Am I never to get anything but poisoned shafts?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Do they hurt?" inquired the pretty coquette.

"Dreadfully," Boyd answered.

"I'm so very glad."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I thought Royal Academicians quite invulnerable,—far above all mundane attacks."

She turned away to Lady Deverell, and so cut off the chance of a reply. Val had managed to draw Miss Vereker aside.

"Will you ride, Miss Vereker?" he asked.

"No. I prefer the wagonette," she replied.

Another man might have been annoyed by the curtness of the response; Val's face was perfectly serene. With equal serenity he continued,—

"If I had ventured to suggest the wagonette, should you have preferred to ride?"

"Possibly."

He was not to be beaten in self-possession.

"Do you answer 'Possibly' to everything?" he asked.

The question would have been an impertinence in any one else. Val had the knack of giving utterance to everything that came uppermost in his mind with such a perfectly calm and well-bred air that he never offended. The lady was his match in this respect.

"Not when the question is too weak to admit of 'possibility,'" she answered.

Val's face was still unruffled.

"Admitting my weakness where you are concerned," he said, "if I venture to offer myself as an escort, is there a chance of my offer being accepted?"

"Possibly," replied the lady again.

Lady Deverell and the rest were on the move.

"I want you all to come and see my new picture before we start," said Sir Arthur.

"What, the Sir Joshua?" asked Boyd.

"Yes. It's only just arrived. It's a gem, I can assure you."

"It ought to be," growled Sir John, who had not risen from his seat; "that is, if you gave three thousand pounds for it."

"I'd have given double rather than let it slip," said the baronet. "It's in the library; so come along all of you, if you want to see something really fine."

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

### EVIL TIDINGS.

SIR JOHN settled himself comfortably in his seat when the last of the party had disappeared within the quaint old porch. The spot was his favorite one for reading the papers, when the weather was at all propitious. He was there so often that he had acquired a feeling of proprietorship in connection with it, and he had felt all the morning that his territory had been ruthlessly invaded.

He sat for some time looking out over the distant landscape; not that the scene had any particular charm for him,—the love of the beautiful, if he had ever indulged in it in youth, had long since been expelled from his nature by a hard practical life,—but he was revolving in his mind many things connected with his friend Sir Arthur, which did not leave him sufficiently at rest to enable him to pursue his favorite occupation,—reading the papers.

The sun was increasing in heat. Ice frozen at a temperature of forty degrees below zero takes a long time to thaw, and the old admiral had been so thoroughly frozen in the Polar seas that he could stand a good deal of thawing still. The hum of insects and the odor of roses which pervaded the soft air were irresistible, however; their soothing influence began to tell on him. He looked languidly at the paper once or twice, and then let it fall on his knees: his eyes closed, his head gradually fell on one side. For one brief instant he dreamed that he was falling from the main-yard of his old ship, and he was broad awake again in a moment. The paper was again raised; his eyes ran down a few lines of the first leading article,—the letters became indistinct, then ran together, then disappeared. His head went backwards this time, and reposed comfortably against the back of the terrace-seat: the transition state was so brief that dreams were absent, and he slept in peace.

An independent young fly who was pursuing a reckless course along the terrace was attracted by the calm face of the sleeper, and “brought up” on a neighboring twig of myrtle. Having completed its distant survey very much to its own satisfaction, and satisfied itself as well that the sleeper really slept, it decided on a closer inspection. The nose—somewhat of the Roman character—presented the best point of observation for a survey of the facial scenery; and on the tip of the nose it accordingly alighted. The effect was disastrous.

Sir John was a light sleeper. The application of the fly's proboscis to the admiral's nose caused the latter to start up, and in the confusion of the moment to inflict a severe blow upon the said nose, intended for the unprincipled disturber of his slumbers, who, as the blow fell, darted nimbly on one side, and, with a most reprehensible entomological indifference, pursued its reckless way along the terrace.

The forty winks which the admiral had snatched, however, had freshened him up for his paper in a wondrous manner. He recommenced the leading article, and tracked it to the end without a check. Presently, however, his thoughts reverted to the place he was in and its owner, and again the paper dropped on to his knees. Then his thoughts shaped themselves into words.

"A contrast between uncle and nephew," he said. "It's enough to make the old man turn in his grave. To think how many years it took him to clear the estates only to pave the way to this reckless extravagance! Three thousand pounds for a picture,—for a shilling's worth of paint on a square yard of canvas. Why, you might paint a line-of-battle ship for half the money, and have something to show for it into the bargain. Shocking! shocking!"

His musings were cut short by the approach of a servant round the angle of the terrace.

"Mr. Bulfinch wishes to speak with you, Sir John," the man said.

"To speak with me? What does he want with me?"

"I'm not aware, Sir John," replied the servant. "Shall I say you will see him?"

"No,—that is, yes,—if he wishes to see me. I suppose he has something particular to say."

"Yes, Sir John. He asked for Sir Arthur, but, finding he was out, said he should be obliged if you would see him."

"Let him come here, then. Confound the man!" he con-

tinued, as the servant withdrew; "am I never to get a moment's peace to read the papers? I must make short work of him, for I hate the fellow from the bottom of my heart. A conceited vulgar upstart. I wonder Arthur doesn't get rid of him."

Emerging from the porch came Mr. John Bulfinch, junior, a man of some six- or eight-and-thirty. Sir Arthur had long since forgotten the incident of the hunting-field, when Bulfinch, junior, upset Katie in the gateway and had felt the weight of Arthur's cane. Bulfinch, senior, had served the Deverells long and faithfully, and the son was forgiven for the sake of his father.

Mr. John Bulfinch's chief characteristic was obtrusiveness. He was obtrusive in every sense of the word, from the exuberant bushiness of his red whiskers, to the exasperating polish of his patent-leather boots. He was nevertheless what people called a successful man,—the success of sheer impudence, not of talent. His father had, from the possession of business-like habits and incessant industry, risen from a comparatively humble position to become a partner in a respectable firm of solicitors at Sandport, of whom he at last remained the sole surviving partner, and the provincial attorney of the Deverells. The son had not inherited the father's good qualities. He had been wild in youth, and in later life greedy in the acquisition of wealth, that it might be lavished on his own pleasures, and was, moreover, not over-scrupulous as to the mode in which it was attained. He had contrived, however, to keep himself sufficiently respectable to retain the practice after his father's death, supplying a deficiency of brains by a plethora of words, which, in the mouth of a lawyer, too often deludes the weak-minded, who are easily overwhelmed by a shower of technicalities. He was the first to speak, of course. He always was. If he had been in the presence of the queen herself, he would have at once addressed her Majesty with his

usual obtrusive unctuousness,—though probably her Majesty would not have been disposed to consider him, as the shallow souls of his native town did, “such a nice free-spoken gentleman.”

“Good-morning, Sir John,” he said, advancing and taking off his hat with a flourish. He always took off his hat on every possible occasion. He had heard that George the Fourth took off his hat with a grace that nobody could surpass. John Bulfinch at once determined that there was no reason why, in this respect, he should not be at least the equal of the deceased monarch; and it would be rash to say how many times he had practiced before the glass, so immensely to his own satisfaction that he lost no opportunity of performing the same feat in the presence of spectators; while the expression which accompanied the act said, as clearly as words, “George the Fourth couldn’t do it better.”

“Good-morning, Sir John. A lovely morning. I hope I find you well.”

“Thank you, sir,” responded the worthy admiral, whose visage grew stern at the first words of the questioner: “with me that is a superfluous inquiry. I’m always well.”

“Ah! an enviable condition, Sir John,—an enviable condition: but, still, who could be ill on such a lovely morning? A second summer, Sir John,—quite an Indian summer, blue sky, yellow leaves, birds’ songs. It enlivens the heart, elevates the soul,—lifts one up, in fact. Alone, Sir John?”

“I was until you arrived, Mr. Bulfinch.”

“Ah! solitude on such a morning is, to say the least, charming.”

“I was just thinking so.”

“Ah, indeed! yes. Musing, no doubt?”

“No; reading the papers.”

“Ah, yes, papers. Yes; what should we be without our papers? Breakfast wouldn’t be breakfast without the *Times*,



nor tea without the *Globe*. The paper in one hand, a cup of hot tea in the other, with plenty of sugar and cream, and the buttered toast literally melting in one's mouth,—what pleasure in life can equal it? Sir Arthur out?"

• "Yes; they're all out."

There was a pause of a few seconds; then the lawyer continued:

"Ah, well, I've a great respect for Sir Arthur,—an immense respect,—but I'm not altogether sorry to find you alone, Sir John. You are, I believe, a very old friend, Sir John?"

Another form in which Mr. Bulfinch's obtrusiveness was especially offensive was in the perpetual repetition of the particular appellative of the person he addressed. The constant recurrence of the "Sir John" tickled his own vanity, for it pleasantly reminded him of the fact that he was conversing on easy terms with an admiral and a K.C.B.

The admiral forgot his dislike to the man for a moment, in the remembrances awakened by the question.

"His oldest friend," he said; "known him ever since he was a boy. Served with his father up to the time of his death. Look upon Arthur almost as my own son."

Mr. Bulfinch assumed a sentimental expression, suitable to the occasion. "It's really fortunate, then, that I find you at home, Sir John,—very fortunate. It will, in fact, make matters run more smoothly."

"Make what matters run more smoothly?" asked the admiral, in surprise.

"Excuse my answering a moment, Sir John. I am admiring this exquisite view. What is it Shakspeare says? 'This castle hath a—hath a—' dear me! how does it run? 'The air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our senses.'"

"Excuse me, Mr. Bulfinch. If you have anything to say,

had you not better say it before we are interrupted? Shakespeare can no doubt wait."

"Quite right, Sir John,—perfectly right,—but, still, on such a lovely morning it seems hard to revert to a topic which may give possible pain,—Sir Arthur, for instance. Like you remember him ever since he was a boy. My father, as perhaps you are aware, transacted all his uncle's legal matters; while I have transacted all Sir Arthur's. Put up with many a snub, too. A proud race the Deverells,—infernal proud."

There was an expression in Mr. Bulfinch's eye as he uttered the last words which was not pleasant to behold. The remembrance of the riding-whip came back to him with peculiar vividness. The look, however, was not observed by Sir John, who replied simply, in order to keep his objectionable visitor to the point,—

"You were referring to Sir Arthur himself?"

"Well, yes," the lawyer continued,—“riding no doubt at this moment without a thought of care, enjoying the birds and the sunshine: just what he is fit for,—just what I like when I get the chance,—but, unfortunately, no head for business.”

“Mr. Bulfinch,” the admiral replied, rather testily, “I gather from your remarks that you have something unpleasant to say. Oblige me by saying it. Is Sir Arthur in any difficulty?”

Mr. Bulfinch sat back in his chair, and contemplated the blue sky. “No, my dear sir,” he said, nothing of much moment to a philosophic mind, such as yours or mine. The shock will be great at first, no doubt. It's not pleasant, even in such lovely weather, to be told an unpleasant truth, but the fact of the matter is, Percival Keith has—bolted.”

The admiral spun round, as if he had been shot. “Percival Keith bolted!” he echoed.

“Bolted yesterday morning,—clean gone,—evaporated.”

The admiral resumed his former position.

"On second thoughts, I consider it rather a good riddance of bad rubbish," he said.

"A philosophic way of looking at it, Sir John, worthy of yourself, and quite in harmony with the weather. I should regard it in that light myself, only Keith's evaporation involves consequences of some importance to Sir Arthur."

"What consequences, Mr. Bulfinch?"

"Well,—shall we say the break-up of this most charming establishment, the sale of his estates, the——"

"Good God, sir! what do you mean?" interrupted Sir John.

The lawyer assumed a more serious expression.

"If I must descend to plain matter of fact," he said, "I mean that Sir Arthur has been leading a reckless course for years,—that the estates are hopelessly encumbered,—that some heavy sums are now due,—and that Keith has bolted with all the available cash."

As Mr. Bulfinch delivered himself of these words, he sat back, with the air of a man who had undertaken a great duty and had acquitted himself with satisfaction to himself and to the comfort of all concerned.

Poor Sir John was for a moment speechless. He was too much aghast to notice the disgusting self-satisfaction of the man who had delivered himself of this astounding intelligence. It seemed as if the news were too much for him to comprehend all at once.

"Is this possible?" he at length gasped. "Why, he had a clear twenty thousand a year."

"Quite so, Sir John,—quite so; but a hundred thousand a year would not stand the strain Sir Arthur has put upon the estate. He was hit very hard on the Derby last year, and again at Ascot this year. No income could stand it."

"I never dreamed of this. I knew he was reckless, but I never imagined he was on the brink of ruin."

"Excuse me, Sir John; not on the brink, at the bottom of the pit, sir,—absolutely and entirely at the bottom."

Sir John turned on him so suddenly that Mr. Bulfinch started back, and nearly upset the garden-chair upon which he was seated.

"Upon my soul, sir, I should like to pitch you after him. What do you mean by spouting Shakspeare, and talking all your absurd balderdash about the weather, in the face of such a collapse as this? Who has advised him, I should like to know?"

"Gently, Sir John, gently; you know I had nothing to do with advising him. Keith is the culprit, the sole and entire culprit."

"All very fine, sir! You told me just now that you had been his legal adviser."

"Excuse me again,—not legal adviser. My words were that I had transacted all legal matters. Observe the distinction."

"And pray may I ask the nature of those legal matters?"

"You may, most assuredly. Leases, loans, mortgages——"

"Mortgages!" broke in Sir John, in horror.

"Most certainly,—mortgages upon mortgages, and at heavy interest."

"And what is to be the result, in heaven's name?" the admiral gasped.

"Foreclosure, ruin, penury, possible arrest."

The admiral sprang to his feet with an oath.

"Never!" he cried. "Never! If I spend the last shilling I have in the world, so help me heaven!"

Mr. Bulfinch continued to regard the blue sky attentively.

"Ah, Sir John, I honor the feeling you express, I appreciate your warmth of heart, but the amount is fearful! The estates might have cleared him; but the money! The fifteen thousand, for example, lodged in the bank to pay Nugent,

carried clean off in hard cash,—in crisp bank-notes, Sir John, negotiated doubtless by this time. Another check for three thousand for a single picture, presented only this morning, and, of course, dishonored. Five hundred for a pair of useless Cloisonnée vases, a thousand for the marble Venus: where is all this to come from? The fact is, Sir John, his weak point is that he never understood the value of money. His notion was that an income like his would stretch indefinitely, like india-rubber; but there is a point at which even india-rubber will snap. That point Sir Arthur has reached."

Mr. Bulfinch flourished his pocket-handkerchief complacently, and then produced a trumpet note with his nose, as a finale to the profound sentiment of which he had delivered himself. - -

Sir John was wiping his forehead, down which the perspiration was streaming, from the excess of his emotion. Presently he collected himself sufficiently to speak calmly.

"Mr. Bulfinch, will you tell me one thing? Were you aware of all this?"

"Of all what, Sir John?"

"Of these mortgages, loans, and dishonored checks?"

"Of the mortgages and loans, certainly: the papers were all drawn by me."

"And you offered no remonstrance?"

"I, Sir John? I? when I was assured by Keith that Sir Arthur would never read a single document. No, no; I knew my place better. A proud lot the Deverells,—infernal proud."

The man of large words sat back in his chair with the full consciousness of having adhered strictly to his duty.

"And you considered it right," pursued Sir John, "to go on drawing deeds which meant simply ruin, without insisting on an explanation?"

An ominous cloud was gathering on the admiral's brow.

Mr. Bulfinch was too much occupied with his observation of the natural region of clouds to notice it.

"I did; I may have been mistaken,—but from the bottom of my heart I can say I did. It is useless agitating yourself further, my dear sir; we must all bow to the decrees of Providence."

The cloud was still deepening on the admiral's brow.

"You call *this* a decree of Providence?" he said, sternly.

"I do, most assuredly."

Sir John rose to his feet once more.

"It may be a decree of Providence," he said, "that a man who won't look into his own affairs comes to grief; but I tell you, sir, it is no less a decree of Providence that I should call all those who have had a hand in *this* affair a set of infernal swindlers, sir."

The admiral grasped his silver-headed cane in a manner that intimated to the lawyer the advisability of placing a few yards between them. Mr. Bulfinch moved suddenly to the other side of the terrace.

"Really, Sir John, this language somewhat exceeds the limits of vituperation allowed by law."

"A very little more, sir, would make me exceed the limits of *castigation* allowed by law; but the time is too precious. My poor boy!—my poor dear boy! Thank God, I was here to break the fearful news to him! Do you know, sir, where this villain is gone?" he added. "Has nothing been done to arrest him?"

Mr. Bulfinch was not inclined to beard the old sea-lion in his den: he answered, meekly,—

"You cannot suppose that a single thing has been left undone. It is, however, useless, I fear. He's had too many hours start, and has doubtless put leagues of blue sea between himself and the officers of justice long before this."

"And what do you propose doing, pray?"

"I came here this morning to arrange. I was fortunate in finding you. Mr. Poulson, the banker, will be here presently. You will, of course, inform Sir Arthur as soon as he returns."

"For God's sake, let us decide on something," returned the admiral. "It will be the death of him. Mercy on us! to think such villainy should be allowed to exist! Come to my room, and let us talk the matter over as quietly as we can."

He turned slowly away, followed by the man of evil tidings. There was something in the admiral's look and gait which conveyed the idea of ten years being added to his age. He seemed quite broken down, and, if Mr. Bulfinch had not been still so intent upon the sky, he might have seen a tear trickle down the weather-beaten cheek which had serenely borne the brunt of nearly fifty years of hard service in his country's cause.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TWO PAIRS OF LOVERS.

THE terrace was left to its roses for the rest of the morning. Luncheon had been conveyed to Denham Chase, and the party were not expected to return until towards evening.

The shadows were just beginning to lengthen in the angles of the old mansion, when Blanche Somers, in her riding-habit, emerged from the porch, followed by Mr. Boyd.

The young lady looked flushed, and chose to affect an indignation which might be taken for what it was worth. She turned sharply on her admirer.

"This comes of trusting to your guidance, Mr. Boyd."

"I thought you knew the way. I trusted to you," he replied.

"Nonsense! We shall get nicely laughed at. I suppose they have all come back."

"No. I have inquired; no one has come back yet."

"Then what in the world are we to do?"

Boyd lounged easily against the balustrade, lightly tapping it with his whip. "I'm quite happy," he said.

"Mr. Boyd, you're most provoking. You're not a bit sorry for what you've done."

"I'm afraid I *am* a hardened sinner. I can't regret our ride. We've had a delightful *tête-à-tête*, and——"

"Missed the very thing we went to see. How supremely ridiculous we shall look when they come back!"

"Then we had better be out of the way. As they have not returned, why shouldn't we take a walk? I wish you would," he added, in an earnest tone. "I want to impart to you a very important secret."

The lady was not so easily conciliated. "I object to walking in my habit," she said, eurtly; then, as Boyd approached her, she continued, "Don't come near me. I'm much too angry; you make me feel quite like a porcupine."

"In what way, for pity's sake?"

"All over sharp little points."

The artist smiled.

"So is a rose," he said; "but we don't shun it on account of its prickles. We take all the more pains to pluck it."

The pretty compliment had its effect; but the lady would not confess it.

"And make your fingers smart for a week," she responded.

Boyd spoke in an earnest tone.

"Miss Somers,—Blanche,—let there be a truce to this banter. Let us be serious a moment."

"Well, I am quite serious; but pray don't call me by my Christian name. Only think, if any one should have heard you!"



Boyd went on in his grave tone.

"May I not claim that privilege? You must know what I feel for you."

Blanche looked up with a returning twinkle in her pretty eyes.

"How should I? You never told me!"

"Love's language is not upon the lips," said the artist.

"He speaks in the glance of an eye, the quickened throbbing of the heart, the tremulous touch of the hand. I do love you, —deeply, devotedly. Will you consent to be my wife?"

He was on the seat by her side now, and she did not move. A flush of happiness stole over her face, however, in spite of herself; but the temptation to play with her enthusiastic lover—so irresistible in the heyday of youth and happiness—was still uppermost.

"It is no good my consenting," she said.

"Why not, in heaven's name?"

"Because you must ask the Lord Chancellor."

The answer was a startling one, and made Boyd open his eyes to their utmost stretch.

"The Lord Chancellor!" he echoed, in surprise.

"Of course. Don't you know I'm a ward?"

"I did not know it; but it makes no difference."

"Oh, yes, it does, though," she persisted. "The Lord Chancellor is very particular. He may have a prejudice against Royal Academicians: a good many people have. And perhaps you may have turned out a portrait of him some time or other; and that would be fatal, you know."

Boyd began to look seriously chagrined.

"Can you not be serious for once?" he said.

"I'm perfectly serious," she replied. Then, turning away her head, and speaking very fast, she added, "I like you very much indeed,—there! I never said anything half so dreadful before. I'm blushing fearfully, I know. But the Lord

Chancellor is a very serious business, I can assure you. Do you know I saw him once?"

Boyd had brightened up at her declaration, and was so supremely happy that he fell in with her lighter mood.

"Were you very much frightened?" he asked.

"Dreadfully, when I first went in; but I was so disappointed. I thought he always sat on a woollen sack and wore a long wig; but he was in a leather arm-chair and had a bald head. Of course I was very demure, for I knew he could send me to prison if he liked."

"Indeed!" cried Boyd, endeavoring to look concerned.

"Oh, yes," she continued; "and I am told he has the privilege of transporting any one who marries me without his consent."

"I should be transported in any case if I married you. I don't mind running the fearful risk."

Blanche was quite melted by this time.

"Don't you," she responded. "What pretty things you do say! If you said half such pretty-things to the Lord Chancellor,—told him he was a rose, for instance,—he would consent at once."

He was closer to her now, and had taken her hand, which was not withdrawn.

"May I try?" he said, softly.

"Yes, if you like to risk transportation!" She suddenly started. "Good gracious! here they come!" she exclaimed.

Boyd rose with as much coolness as he could command. Sir Arthur and the rest of the party approached from the end of the terrace.

Deverell laughed as he drew near. "Be good enough to give an account of yourselves, you two," he exclaimed.

"I told you we should be brought to the bar of public opinion," said Blanche, in an undertone, to Boyd. Then aloud to Sir Arthur,—

"I refer you to my escort; I'm not responsible."

"Indeed, I think you are," retorted Sir Arthur. "Mr. Boyd preferred the lady to the landscape, evidently."

"You forget, Sir Arthur, that my studies are generally figure, not landscape," pleaded Boyd.

"And you thought you would take a quiet opportunity of continuing your studies this morning. Well, under the circumstances, I don't blame you."

He turned to his wife. "Now, touching these theatricals you're all bent on having?" he said.

"Let us form ourselves into a committee," cried Lady Devorell. "Mr. Poingdestre, you're a great actor,—you shall be chairman."

"No," said Val, who was conversing in an undertone with Miss Vereker; "I delegate that honor to our host."

"Yes, yes, of course."

There was a general clamor of voices round Sir Arthur. Val and Miss Vereker were leaning out over the terrace, a little apart.

"You were going to tell me what it is you especially worship," the lady said.

"Money! and its personification in you," was the daring answer.

Miss Vereker drew herself up stiffly. The answer was almost too much even for her equanimity to tolerate.

"You are candid, certainly," she said.

"I told you this morning I liked to go straight, though it sometimes got me into difficulties. Has it done so in this case?" he asked, with an earnestness not usual in him.

Miss Vereker paused a moment before she replied, then she said, somewhat coldly,—

"I forgive you, for the novelty of your confession."

"Then you are not offended?"

"No."

Val felt encouraged. He went on gayly :

"I may, perhaps, venture to hope that my candor is more palatable to you than the flattery which assails you wherever you go?"

"Possibly."

"And—that I have found some favor in your sight?"

"Possibly."

There was another pause. Val was feeling his ground.

"You may think me strange," he said. "I own my ideas are often at variance with the rest of the world. They say that money is the root of all evil: they are wrong. The root of all evil is—impecuniosity."

"You think so," she replied.

"I am sure of it," he insisted. "People with money have their trials, I admit; but people without, have their trials, also, and the aggravation of impecuniosity to boot."

Lady Deverell's voice was heard at this moment.

"'A Bold Stroke for a Wife'? Oh, dear, no: that's quite too old for our present ideas."

Val turned, and followed Miss Vereker towards the group.

"I venture to differ, Lady Deverell. I think at the present time it is very appropriate."

At this moment a servant appeared, and approached Sir Arthur.

"Sir John Bolt wishes to see you in the library, immediately, Sir Arthur," the man said.

"What does he want?" demanded the baronet, somewhat impatiently.

"I'm not aware, Sir Arthur. Mr. Bulfinch is with him."

"Mr. Bulfinch,—at this time! What can he want? Say I will come," he added.

The servant re-entered the house, Sir Arthur turned to follow.

"I shall be back presently, Katie," he said. "Meanwhile,

you can talk the matter over. I only stipulate for one thing,—I must have an easy part. I'm not good at sentiment or sudden emotion."

---

## CHAPTER XV.

### RUIN.

SIR ARTHUR passed into the library.

Mr. Bulfinch and Mr. Poulson, the banker, were seated at the table, examining some papers. Although to some extent associated with Bulfinch in the affairs connected with the Norton estates, the banker was a complete contrast to the lawyer. He was a man of the strictest integrity,—modest, unassuming, yet calculated by his manner to inspire every one who had any dealings with him with the utmost confidence in his ability. He rose as Sir Arthur entered the room, and advanced to meet him. The baronet shook hands with him warmly, nodded to Mr. Bulfinch, and passed on at once to Sir John Bolt, who was seated by the window.

The admiral's face wore such a look of pain that Sir Arthur was quite startled.

"Why, Sir John, I hope there is nothing serious the matter? You look quite ill."

His old friend motioned to him to sit down. He did so, looking from one to the other, as if seeking some explanation.

"You positively alarm me with your grave faces. What does it all mean?" he asked.

Mr. Bulfinch was about to speak, but Sir John stopped him by a movement of his hand. The old admiral's voice was quite changed from the firm laconic utterances of the night before. It was tremulous as if with extreme age.

"I wish to heaven, Arthur, I could in any way soften the fearful intelligence I have to impart. It is a hard task for one who loves you as I do. God help you to bear it patiently!"

Sir Arthur looked at him in amazement. "What on earth do you mean?" he asked.

"It is useless keeping you in suspense," the admiral replied. "You remember my warning about Keith? That warning came too late. Keith has absconded with a large sum of money."

Sir Arthur again looked at his informant with an expression which seemed to imply that he had taken leave of his senses.

"Keith absconded! Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"God knows I should be only too glad to think so," was the answer. "It is only too true; and worse remains to be told."

"Stop!" cried Sir Arthur, with a bitter smile. "Before you go on, give me time to take in this interesting fact."

He rose from his chair, strode across the room, and, placing his arms on the mantel-piece, let his head fall on them for a moment, as if thinking. When he turned and looked at them again, his face had quite changed: his lips were compressed, and his words fell from them with a cold distinctness.

"Do you mean to tell me that the man I have trusted as I would my own brother has played me false?" He turned to the banker. "Mr. Poulson, you are a sensible man. What do you know? Is there no possibility that my old friend is deceived?"

The banker kept his eyes on the table before him.

"I regret to say, none," he answered.

Deverell drew a quick breath, as if in pain, but he did not move.

"So be it, then," he said, with a look of concentrated scorn on his lips. "After this, gentlemen, I am not likely to be much disturbed by any further intelligence."

He turned, and, standing with his back against the mantelpiece, regarded them calmly.

Deceit and treachery were qualities Sir Arthur could not understand. The knowledge of the existence of them in one he had trusted so implicitly cut him like a knife,—so deeply, indeed, that sensation seemed for a time numbed. But had Keith himself been there, and Deverell assured of his guilt, the position of the steward would not have been enviable.

"I am waiting, gentlemen," he said, after a pause of a minute or two.

His calmness seemed to rob Sir John of the small amount of resolution remaining in his breast. It was like commencing a painful operation anew, to continue what he had to say.

Bulfinch had all this time been gloating over the approaching discomfiture of the "infernally proud" Deverells. He was impatient of delay, and he saw that the admiral was speechless. Now was his time.

"The fact is, Deverell, you're a ruined man," he said.

If he had been struck, Sir Arthur could not have been more astounded than he was by the familiar mode in which the lawyer addressed him. He had been accustomed to such sickening obsequiousness from this man, that the contrast of his present tone was startling. Without condescending to reply, however, he addressed himself to Mr. Poulson.

"I presume your presence here at this unusual hour is in connection with this unpleasant affair, Mr. Poulson. This gentleman's announcement is somewhat startling. Will you be so good as to tell me to what extent I am ruined, as he is pleased to express it?"

The two business-men looked at each other, but neither replied. Bulfinch was chafing under the baronet's rebuff, and did not feel disposed to run the risk of another. Sir John, with an effort, collected himself sufficiently to proceed.

"Arthur, it is useless disguising the fact. You must know it sooner or later. Your property is hopelessly involved. The scoundrel has effected your entire ruin."

He paused again, unable to proceed. Deverell became impatient.

"For heaven's sake, one of you, tell me the plain truth, in plain language! It is ridiculous to talk of ruin with an income of twenty thousand a year! To what extent am I involved? Are you all struck dumb? Does it involve the sale of the stud, or a mortgage, or what? Let me know at once."

"That is already effected," said Mr. Poulson, sadly.

Deverell turned on him sharply. "What is already effected?" he asked.

"A mortgage on Norton Towers."

"Norton Towers mortgaged?"

The question was put incredulously. The fact was too difficult to realize. Bulfinch was ready with another shot.

"Yes; and to the last farthing of its value!"

"Norton mortgaged?" again gasped Sir Arthur, looking from one to the other suspiciously. "Upon whose authority, I should like to know?"

Bulfinch selected a parchment from the table, and presented the signature to Sir Arthur. "Upon the authority of your own hand and seal," he answered.

Deverell recognized the writing; it was his own.

"The villain!" he muttered; "he never told me the contents."

"You declined to hear them," responded Bulfinch, whose ear had not lost a word.

Deverell turned on him like lightning. "You appear to be in his secrets, sir," he said.

"So far as that, I was. I urged him not to let you sign until you knew the contents. He told me it was useless,—



that you would not listen. You best know whether or not that was true."

"Too true,—damn him!"

His temper was gone at last. He could have borne it from the others, but to be baited, as it were, by Bulfinch, was what his proud blood could not brook. He broke out again: "For God's sake, let me know the worst, some one!"

Mr. Poulson replied this time. "Sir John told you the truth when he said you were a ruined man. His words were *literally* true. The liabilities are so enormous that the estates must inevitably go. We sha'n't save a hundred pounds from the wreck. If, however, we could induce Nugent to withdraw his claim——"

His words were arrested by the action of Sir Arthur. He advanced towards the table, stopped suddenly, and grasped the back of a chair. The overwhelming force of the blow which had fallen seemed to paralyze him; but his pride still struggled to maintain a calm exterior, and his words were firm.

"Nugent will *not* withdraw his claim. I will not allow him."

The blood of the old race was in those words. Even in this extremity, the man he intended to befriend should not suffer through his fault. He would die rather.

Bulfinch struck in again with a covert sneer:

"Yes; but if the estate don't cover the liabilities, Nugent must take his share with the rest!"

Deverell started as if he had been stung, then drew himself up proudly.

"The estate *shall* cover the liabilities, if I sell the last acre I have in the world, the last picture on these walls," he added, sadly, turning to the choice collection of gems he had gathered in that room for his own especial enjoyment. "Mr. Poulson, we will go into these matters to-morrow. I must have time to think."

He turned suddenly to Bulfinch, and fixed on him a glance before which that gentleman, with all his bravado, seemed to cower. A new light, like a revelation, at that moment dawned upon Sir Arthur. The scene in the hunting-field came back to him, as vividly as if it had occurred but yesterday, together with the remembrance of many suspicious incidents connected with their later intercourse. When he spoke again, it was in a stern tone of conviction which left the man whom he addressed, in spite of all his efforts, white and speechless.

"Mr. Bulfinch," he said, "an instinct tells me that you are at the bottom of this villainy. God forgive me if I am wrong, but I feel absolutely convinced that you have schemed and plotted to bring about this result. You will, therefore, leave this house to-day for the last time. You will hand over your papers to me. Meanwhile, rest assured of this, that if my words are true, your villainy will one day find you out, as sure as there is a God above us. Come, Sir John, they will be waiting dinner."

He strode across the room. For one brief instant he seemed to waver, and his hand wandered in a purposeless kind of way towards the handle of the door. The next moment he grasped it firmly, threw open the door, and waited for Sir John to pass out. Then he turned to the banker.

"Mr. Poulson, you will take dinner with us?" he said.

The banker glanced down at his morning costume, apologetically.

"Oh, we will excuse your dressing. We have no strangers coming. You will join us in the drawing-room."

The blood of the old race upheld him even in this terrible crisis, and he passed from the room with a firm step.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE.

THE tide of fashion, resistless and impetuous, sweeping westward over London, has left many a noble mansion, stately square, and broad street, high and dry upon the social beach, —stranded like the wrecks of ships, that once teemed with life and light and motion.

The district of Fitzroy Square has followed, in this respect, the fate of its predecessors of Russell and Bedford. The square still stands, as of old, in serene respectability; but the adjacent localities are undergoing a process of degeneration which threatens ere long to infect the whole and reduce it to a dead level of demoralization.

Charlotte Street, not many years since consisting entirely of private houses, has of late yielded to the resistless sway of shops and gin-palaces. These enemies of quietude and repose still stand somewhat in awe of the square itself, and have not even ventured to attack the upper end of the street. Here a few private residences and artists' studios may still be found, together with a number of houses let out in cheap lodgings. It is to the third floor of one of these latter that I would conduct my reader, some three months after the catastrophe which fell upon the owner of Norton Towers.

The room is a poor one, the furniture of the most meagre description, the carpet a thing of shreds and patches; but for all that there are evidences, difficult to define, that the occupants are of a superior class to those whose usual lot it is to

pass their lives at an elevation of three flights of stairs above the street-pavement.

The time is half-past eight in the morning, which, in the heart of London in mid-winter, means a dismal twilight of mingled smoke and fog, which penetrates into every chink and crevice of the house and into the very marrow of one's bones. Looking from the window at the dull, black, monotonous houses opposite, just dimly discerned through the chilling fog, it is difficult to believe we are in the same world that we gazed on from the terrace of Norton Towers in the golden autumn days. Yet the changes in the physical aspects of nature are as great as the inner perturbations of spirit which mark our course through life, and which cannot be set aside.

As the clocks of the neighboring churches chime the half-hour, there comes through the doorway leading from the staircase a victim of one of the worst systems of slavery which exists in these days,—a London maid-of-all-work. She is, however, a better specimen of the type than one generally meets with in these quarters, for her face still wears something of its original plumpness, and her dress is not absolutely in rags.

In her hands—whose condition of dirt deludes one at the first glance into the belief that she has on tight-fitting dark gloves—she carries a tray, with a plain breakfast set thereon; and hitched to the little finger of the right hand is a very black kettle containing hot water.

She sets the tray upon the table with a bang, which indicates the weary length of stairs she has mounted, and the consequent impossibility of having held out with it, even for a few extra yards. She gives a deep sigh of relief, as she sees it safely brought to an anchor, and then proceeds to the fire and deposits the kettle on the extreme apex of a very pointed piece of coal, which occupies the exact centre of the very small grate.

Susan, for that is her name, has not been favored with fre-

quent opportunities of studying dynamics in the course of her education, and Sir Isaac's theory of gravitation is a thing unknown to her. The fact that presented itself to her was this, that the pointed "knub" of coal prevented the kettle from standing on the fire, and that, therefore, the "knub" was her natural enemy. She tried to outflank the enemy by placing the kettle to the right; but the kettle made so sudden a descent in the same direction that she was fain to catch it up again. Then the left flank was attempted, with a like result. Then she tried the apex once more, but this time the kettle made such a violent dip towards Susan herself,—as if meditating assault and battery for being forced to sit on the fire,—and launched its lid, accompanied by a jet of water from the spout, with such evident malice at Susan's legs, that she was within an ace of letting go her hold and beating a retreat altogether. Forced into the conviction, however, that the enemy to be summarily disposed of was the "knub" of coal, she seized the poker, and dealt it such a succession of vigorous blows that in a few seconds its trituration was complete, and a dead level of smoking particles produced, upon which the kettle reposed, as upon the bones of its enemy, with so much comfort to itself that it broke incontinently into song.

The task completed, Susan turned from the fire, and placed her hands upon her hips.

"Oh, my precious legs!" she exclaimed. "Why ever people build houses up in the sky bothers me. Must be a purpose to try servants' legs! It's lucky for me I've got a pair of good 'uns!" she continued, complacently regarding the particular members to which she referred, which were not too closely concealed by the somewhat scanty gown. "Four pair o' stairs, counting the kitchen, to get to the third floor,—twenty-four to each pair! Ninety-six up, and ninety-six down, ten or eleven times in a morning. You'd better be sent to the treadmill at once."

Having delivered herself of this sweeping condemnation of the whole tribe of builders, Susan took a duster from a small chiffonnière, and proceeded to rub the furniture, continuing her soliloquy as she rubbed.

"There's one comfort, the top floors is generally the nicest; leastways, they don't give 'alf the trouble and don't give themselves 'alf so many airs. I'd wear my feet down to ankle-stumps for these here two up here now. A real lady I call her; and as for 'im, pore man, you might blow him away with the bellus."

At this moment she was arrested in her labors by the sound of coughing which proceeded from a room the door of which was opposite the one by which she had entered. An expression of real anxiety stole over Susan's face as she listened. It was a hard, hollow cough, which indicated severe bronchial affection or diseased lungs.

"He's wus again to-day," Susan soliloquized as she returned to her labors. "I wouldn't give a ha'porth of soap for his life in this here fog and smoke."

Having completed her dusting, she again went to the drawer in the chiffonnière, and, restoring the duster, took out a table-cloth, which she proceeded to lay.

"There's one comfort," she said, "I ain't got the ground-floor on my mind. Mr. Herbert, what has the studio and dining-room, has got his own 'Buttons;' and a pretty specimen of a Buttons he is, too. What with his walk, and what with his wanity, I wonder he ain't bust his buttons afore this."

The cloth and breakfast-things being arranged to her satisfaction, Susan next proceeded to the cupboard by the fire-place and brought forth some bread and some suspicious-looking butter, which she also conveyed to the table. Then, giving another glance at the fire, and seeing that the kettle still reposed there in comfort and was singing at its loudest, she

looked round with a complacent smile; and fell once more into her soliloquizing strain, half sitting on the table the while.

"Mr. Herbert, now,—what lovely pictures he do paint! I wonder how I should look in a picture," she continued, posing herself in front of the small glass over the chimney-piece. "I never have been took off, but he might just as well paint me as them models as is always a coming."

As if to confirm the correctness of this sentiment, she seated herself at the table and, resting her cheek upon her hand, in much the same position as Miss Capulet was wont to adopt upon the terrace by moonlight, managed to imprint a very decided indication of the state of her hands upon her somewhat retroussé nose. Had Mr. Herbert seen her at this moment, he would, in all human probability, have been fired with the same sentiment as Susan herself,—her appearance being one which no artist, with any pretensions to a love of the beautiful, could possibly have resisted.

Her reveries were, however, interrupted by the opening of the door leading to the bedroom, and the entrance of a lady.

Her attire was of the plainest possible kind. Her face was white and worn; anxiety of the most intense and painful character was depicted in her faded cheeks; but through all the sad changes, no one could fail for a moment to recognize Lady Deverell.

Shall I venture to say she was even more beautiful than in the palmy days gone by? If beauty is judged by the spirit and not by the bodily frame, she was. Her beauty was the beauty of Ary Scheffer's St. Monica,—etherealized by days of untold sorrow, sanctified, purified, made almost divine.

To Susan she was known only as Mrs. Morley, the wife of the invalid whose coughing had been heard in the inner room. They had taken the lodgings, in that name, some two months before, and ever since that time the husband had been a confirmed invalid, and a source of painful anxiety to the wife,

whose unwearying attentions had so touched the heart of the humble housemaid.

"Good-morning, mum," said the latter, as Lady Deverell entered the room. "I'm afraid Mr. Morley ain't so well this morning."

"He's had a bad night, Susan," replied Lady Deverell. Then, with the consideration she always evinced towards even the humblest of her fellow-creatures, she added, "I am very sorry to trouble you, but would you bring me up one of the new-laid eggs and the little saucepan?"

The recollection of the four flights of stairs which this request involved at once presented itself to Susan's mind, and she again mentally ejaculated, "Oh, my precious legs!"

She would not for the world, however, have allowed the thought to appear on the surface.

"Yes, mum," she answered; "but I think there's only one left."

"That will be enough. Is the milkman come?"

"No, but it's near his time."

Susan's self-denial met with its immediate reward.

"Then you had better wait until he comes, and so save yourself two journeys."

Susan turned a look of gratitude on the speaker. It was so seldom—so very seldom—during her hard life that she had met with consideration like this from those successive lodgers whose slave she had been, that she could hardly realize the fact; so she continued gazing a moment on the beautiful face before her, in silent gratitude.

The pause was, however, a fatal one, for it involved poor Susan in a new trouble,—the very questionable condition of her face.

"Why, Susan, you've never washed your face again!" exclaimed Lady Deverell, observing the smut on the nose, and the general grimy condition of the "index of the mind."



"Ain't had time, mum," she replied, as if that were a sufficient check to all further argument; and then, as if impressed with the utter futility of such an operation to one in her condition, she added, "Besides, it's no use whatsomever."

"Why not?" was the somewhat astonished reply.

"'Cos I should be as black as a nigger again in 'alf an hour."

"But why need you be?" persisted Lady Deverell.

Susan looked at her questioner for a moment, in apparent commiseration of the ignorance of kitchen-life displayed by the question.

"Was you ever in a lodging-house kitchen, mum?" she asked. "I mean a *London* lodging-house kitchen?" she added, as if to give increased significance to the inquiry.

"No, never."

"Then don't never go," was the emphatic rejoinder. "You'd never ask why my face was dirty if you did, and you'd never eat no more dinner again as long as you're here, that I promise you!"

"Oh, Susan!" was the involuntary rejoinder.

"For what with the blacks and what with the beetles a-crawling over everythink," continued Susan, "it's enough to upset *me*, let alone the likes of you. Beetles is bad enough when you're awake. The floor's so black with 'em I'm obliged to set on the table to eat my dinner; but when you're asleep, they're wus!"

"Asleep! Surely, you don't sleep down there?"

"There ain't no place else for me to. The attics is all let. But there's the milkman a-calling. I'll be up again in a minute, and I'll bring up the egg."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## BROKEN DOWN.

LADY DEVERELL seated herself at the table, to await Susan's return. In the midst of her own sorrows, she could still feel for the hard life of the poor girl who had just left her.

"Poor thing!" she exclaimed, "she has a good heart, in spite of her dirty face; and what a life of slavery is hers! After all," she added, "it is to be preferred to mine. As long as she does her work,—hard though it be,—she has no anxiety, either present or future."

Her head sank upon her hand, and her thoughts went back to the terrible ordeal she had undergone since that fatal day at Norton, when the story of her husband's ruin was first made known. Bravely as he had borne the shock of the first intelligence, the very effort to conceal the effect it had on his proud nature proved too much for his strength. Within a day or two he had broken down altogether. Perhaps it was a merciful thing that he did so, for it at least spared him the protracted torture of investigating the details of his ruin. They had left Norton for a quiet lodging in the country, where the unflagging devotion of his wife, and the absence of everything which could remind him of the fearful calamity which had befallen him, restored him to comparative health. Still shrinking from all associations with former friends and scenes, he had come to London to seek employment. The very effort, however, caused him to realize his position more keenly. The dark wintry days in the smoky city fed the seeds of a disease which had long lain dormant, and, before many weeks had

passed, he was again an invalid, thrown helplessly on her whose devotion seemed to shine out more vividly in proportion to the darkness of their surroundings. As their privations increased, his morbid but not unnatural repugnance to hold any intercourse with his former associates increased also. An appeal to them, which his wife in despair had suggested, was positively forbidden, and, as his weakness increased, that indifference to extraneous matters which usually accompanies bodily ailments rendered him oblivious to the fact that the small amount they had saved from the wreck was rapidly dwindling away. Not so with the wife, however. The prospect which stared her in the face, when their narrow means were exhausted, haunted her night and day. An accidental meeting with her old friends the Boyds had led to an amount of occupation which, for a time, averted absolute privation; but they were now abroad, and the increasing demands on her time which her husband's illness occasioned rendered her less and less able to raise the money to meet his many requirements.

Her sorrowful musings were cut short by the return of Susan, who carried a little saucepan in her hand, in which the egg, to which so much importance was attached, was rolling about in an alarming manner. As she handed the saucepan to Lady Deverell, it slipped from her hand, and saucepan and egg fell with a crash upon the floor. Susan's face was now a picture indeed.

"Oh, good gracious!" she exclaimed, as she contemplated the shapeless mass of yolk and shell upon the floor with an expression of utter despair.

"Oh, Susan!" echoed Lady Deverell, unable to suppress a feeling of annoyance. "This is terribly vexing. It is the only thing that tempts my husband to eat."

Susan began to whimper.

"Who ever would have thought it was a-going to jump out of my hand like that?" she exclaimed.

"Well, it's no good crying over it, Susan. It cannot be helped: only I don't in the least know what to give him."

"I know what I'll do, mum," exclaimed Susan, suddenly awakening to unwonted activity. "Only just you wait a minute."

Without giving time for inquiries, Susan sped away from the room, leaving Lady Deverell somewhat startled at her abrupt departure. She cut some bread, and, kneeling by the fire, commenced toasting it. Again her thoughts returned to her sad position. She reflected with bitterness upon the terrible difficulty of finding any occupation which she could pursue without being constantly absent from her charge. She dreaded to think what her husband's feelings would be if he should by chance discover the occupation which her kind friend Mr. Boyd had found her. It was of a nature to make his proud spirit rebel, even in the midst of these privations; and the deceit she had practiced in keeping him in ignorance of it weighed more upon her heart than all her own bodily sufferings. She had tried—vainly enough—to gain a subsistence by her needle, but the miserable sum that brought would scarcely suffice to bring in a bare subsistence for herself alone, to say nothing of the many requirements of a sick husband.

"Only those who have tried," she reflected, bitterly, "can know the difficulty of finding any employment in these overcrowded days. It is not for myself I care, but to see him reduced to such poverty, after all the luxuries he has been used to, is terrible. How nobly he has striven to bear up against it, and turn his talents to account!"

She was interrupted by Susan, who returned in triumph, with a large fresh-looking egg.

"I've got it, mum," she exclaimed, with a beaming face. Then, seeing that her favorite, Mrs. Morley, regarded it with a questioning eye, she continued,—

"Oh, you needn't look suspicious. It's a fresh country

egg. I give tuppence for it myself. I heard Mr. Cheesewright—him as keeps the butter and egg shop round the corner—say as how you can always get 'em fresh if you like to pay the price, and he warrants this."

"It is very good of you, Susan; but I can't let you pay."

"Indeed, mum, you will. I was that awkward with the other that I deserves to pay: so there!"

"Well, we'll see about that by-and-by, Susan. That will do for the present."

"Got all you want, mum?"

"Yes, thank you."

Susan left the room, and Lady Deverell, having completed her preparations, advanced towards the bedroom. As she did so, the door opened, and her husband made his appearance.

The change in him was far more painful even than in his wife. The well-knit form had shrunk to a mere skeleton; the lips were white and drawn, the eyes sunken, so that he looked like a dying man.

His wife was by his side in a moment.

"Oh, Arty," she said, "why did you not wait for me to help you?"

"I feel better this morning,—or I fancied myself so," he answered, as he suffered her to lead him to a seat. "I thought I could get in by myself. I have plagued you enough already, darling."

"How can you say that, when you know you'd do a thousand times more for me if you were able," was the quick response.

She went to the fire and took up the egg.

"Now let me tempt you with this," she said, placing it before him.

"No, darling. I've no appetite: you must eat it yourself," he replied.

"Arty," she persisted, in a tone of remonstrance, "you know the doctor said you were to eat one every morning, and you must not be disobedient."

"Very well,—as you will." Then, with a faint smile, "I'll obey as long as I'm an invalid, but when I am well I shall become a tyrant again."

"I am quite willing to accept tyranny on those terms, so you had better make haste and get well, if you want an obedient wife."

At this moment Susan appeared at the door with a newspaper in her hand. After apostrophizing her precious legs as usual, she placed the paper on the table, uttering as she did so the single monosyllable, *Times*.

"Oh, Susan! why didn't you wait until you came for the tray?" demanded Lady Deverell, with her constant consideration.

"'Cos I knowed Mr. Morley liked his paper as soon as it come."

Susan glanced inquiringly at the egg, as she uttered these words, and added, in an undertone, "Was it a good un?"

"A beauty, I think," was the reply, in the same low tone.

"That's all I wanted to know; paper was a hartifice," Susan whispered.

"What are you talking about?" asked Sir Arthur, suddenly looking up.

"Oh, nothing particular, dear. Have you finished?" his wife replied.

"Yes, thanks: I can't eat any more."

"Then you may take away the tray now, Susan."

Susan, however, had another mysterious aside. "I don't believe you've 'ad a morsel yourself," she said.

"Hush! never mind me. Let me help you, Susan."

As Susan had remarked, she had scarcely taken a mouthful herself, but she commenced putting the things on the tray,

and in a few minutes Susan made her exit, loaded as she had been when she first appeared.

Within a very few minutes, Sir Arthur put down the paper with a sigh.

"I'm afraid this is a useless extravagance, dear. I can't see anything in it to suit me,—or rather that I am suitable for. If I were a carpenter or a bricklayer, now, I should be living in clover: they are the people who take life easily in these days."

"Well, don't think anything about it until you are better. You like to read the news. It is not an expensive recreation."

"No; but I'm afraid it's no longer a recreation. How can I feel an interest in the events of a world from which I have so completely withdrawn? Better to have died at once, than to have awakened from a fool's paradise to learn the utter duplicity of those one trusted!"

There was an intense bitterness in the last words which brought forth a remonstrance from the faithful wife.

"Arty!" she said, in a tone of gentle rebuke.

"Forgive me, darling. It is little wonder if I am bitter at times, though I have only myself to thank. However, I have learned one lesson from Adversity. Much as I loved, much as I valued you before, I never should have known all your worth had it not been for this trial."

"Say no more, Arty. Perhaps one day when you are strong and well, and earning an honorable competence, we may look back with thankfulness to this time of trouble, if only because it has shown us how true love, like a steadfast star, shines out more brightly through the night of adversity than it ever can in the full sunshine of prosperity."

"Will that time ever come?" he said, sadly.

"Have patience, darling, and—faith," she answered, hopefully.

Sir Arthur sighed. "Ah, well, I will try," he said, at length. "Give me my drawing-materials," he added, with a sudden resolve.

His wife brought a box of water-colors from a side-table, and, filling a tumbler with water, placed it by his side. Having done this, she took her work and seated herself at the table opposite him.

He contemplated his drawing for some time in silence. Then an expression of discontent stole over his face. He threw down the brush.

"It is quite useless," he said, peevishly. "They would not give half a crown for it. I have no talent this way; and yet they used to say how well I sketched. Rank flattery. Twenty thousand a year makes one a wonderful artist."

His wife rose with a pained expression in her face.

"Come, Arty. You have talent; you know you have. But you are not well. I begged you not to get up this morning."

Sir Arthur sat back in his chair with a sudden expression of pain. Lady Deverell was by his side in a moment.

"There! I knew the exertion would be too much for you," she said. "Why would you not be guided by me? Let me help you back to your room."

This time he quite broke down.

"Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" he moaned.

Her arms were about him almost before the words were uttered.

"Come, Arty darling, do not give way like this. You know your nerves are all unstrung. You are not fit to work, and you shall not. Come back to your room. You ought never to have left it. Come, Arty, for my sake. I shall give way too if you go on in this way. Come, darling, the doctor will be here soon: don't let him find you in this state."

There was a mute observer of this scene in the shape of



Susan, who had entered unperceived, and now stood silent in the doorway.

Sir Arthur at last rose, and, leaning on his wife's arm, advanced slowly towards the bedroom.

The sympathies of Susan could no longer be restrained. As the husband and wife disappeared, she placed her apron to her eyes, and, brushing away her tears, sobbed aloud,—

"She's a hangel! If the 'ouse was the Tower of Babel, and she lived on the top floor, I'd wait on her cheerful, that I would."

Almost before Susan had time to recover herself, Lady Deverell re-entered the room.

"What is it, Susan?" she asked.

Susan's sobs were still difficult of control, so she only replied by handing a letter which she held in her hand.

Lady Deverell's eye ran over it rapidly.

"From darling Blanche!" she exclaimed, with a brighter look than her face had worn for many a long day. "News from her comes like a ray of sunshine through the gloom."

She motioned to Susan to retire, and then seated herself at the table and opened the letter. It was written from Naples, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR LITTLE FRIEND,—

"It seems so long since I have had any news of you, which I fear is a bad sign, for I am sure if you had anything cheerful to say you would have written. I was so hoping to have heard before this that your dear husband had found some occupation suited to his taste, and that his health was sufficiently restored to enable him to relieve you from your painful drudgery. How I wish I could persuade you to accept help from those friends who would be only too glad to come forward, if only until Sir Arthur is restored to health! Does he still cling to his isolation, and refuse to make known his

whereabouts to his friends? Do try and persuade him out of this.

"We have reached Naples at last. Our journey has been one of perpetual sunshine. Clement has been very good, and has stopped to sketch everything I wanted. I told you I should make a galley-slave of him when I had the chance, and I must say he submits to his chains like an angel; though I fear there is not much in common between galley-slaves and angels, and I am jumbling up similes frightfully. He *insists* on my keeping one hand on his shoulder while he is sketching. He says it steadies him, and makes him take pains; though I should have thought it would have had the contrary effect. Miss Vereker is here, and (of course) Mr. Poingdestre. She evidently likes him, but cannot make up her mind to marry. What a pity it is she has no Lord Chancellor to oppose the match! it would have made her frantic to marry him. I say this from experience.

"Oh! the lovely bay! and the moonlight nights! and the orange-groves! and the macaroni! and the dirt and the everything! but you know them well. You must make haste and get rich again, and we'll both be married a second time, and all come out here together. Though I suppose marriage is not absolutely indispensable as a preliminary to a trip to Italy. Still, there is no doubt it makes it very much nicer.

"I shall only plague you with all this. Now, do, like a good girl, sit down and write me an account of all you are doing. I know you are taking care of your husband; but I want you to take care of yourself. The latter personage you are much too apt to neglect. Clement joins me in best love. He says it is impossible for him to send kind regards, and me love, because we have all things in common; so I won't be jealous this time. Believe me

"Ever your affectionate friend,

"BLANCHE BOYD."

For a long time after reading this letter, Lady Deverell sat silently thinking, with the letter open on her lap. The contrast between her friend's happiness and her own sad fate made her lot seem still harder to bear. She resolved, however, that the young wife's happiness should not be overshadowed by the recital of her own woes, whatever she might have to endure.

"No, my dearest Blanche," she said, "when I can send you any good news you shall hear. Until then——"

"Please, mum, the doctor," interrupted the indefatigable Susan, throwing open the door.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MR. HUME.

MR. HUME, the surgeon,—or "doctor," as Susan was pleased to style him,—was a man of about thirty-five years of age. His countenance was calm, grave, and highly intellectual. He was one of those quiet, earnest workers who, if ever they attain eminence, do so by sheer force of intellect, rather than by the aid of outward charms of manner, or a meretricious assumption of knowledge not really possessed.

"I have been quite anxious to see you, Mr. Hume," Lady Deverell said, as they shook hands.

"Not so well this morning?"

"I fear not. Will you go in?"

There was an increased anxiety in her voice which he noticed at once. Without further questioning, he accompanied her to the sick man's room. They were scarcely gone when Susan again appeared. She had some fresh flowers in her hand, which she deposited on the table in a tumbler of water.

"There's a lovely bouket!" she exclaimed, gazing at them in admiration. "Pretty penny that cost, I reckon. I was to give them with Mr. Herbert's compliments, and hopes as Mr. Morley is better."

She paused a moment, and then, putting herself into her favorite attitude for musing, with her hands upon her hips, she continued,—

"I know what he's up to. He's a deep one, he is. He wants to get her to set to him. He'd give twenty pounds—any amount of money—if she would, for I heer'd him say so. Well, he couldn't do better, according to my fancy, for she's a lovely figure, if ever there was one."

Her reveries were interrupted by the sudden entrance of Lady Deverell, who advanced hurriedly to the cupboard.

"Susan, a wineglass quickly!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Morley has fainted."

She took a bottle of wine from the cupboard, and, hastily taking the glass which Susan handed to her, returned to the bedroom.

Susan stood looking after her somewhat aghast.

"Things is getting wuss," she observed, in a sepulchral tone. "It'll be a hearse and plumes soon, if it goes on like this,—with a couple of mutes at the door the fust thing in the morning, to make the 'ouse look cheerful and collect a crowd. Buttons 'll be in his glory."

This time her solitary musings were cut short by the return of Mr. Hume from the sick-room.

"Give me a pen and ink," he said, seating himself at the table.

Susan brought the inkstand and placed it before him, together with a blotting-book and paper.

"That will do," he said, motioning her towards the door.

Susan lingered. "Please, sir, how is the gentleman this morning?" she asked.

"Very poorly," was the brief reply. "That will do," with another look towards the door.

Susan retired reluctantly; but she was not to be defeated. She took up her station on the landing, with an expression which indicated her intention to remain there at all hazards.

It was not mere idle curiosity on the part of the good-hearted girl. Her idol, Mrs. Morley, was so entwined in her heart that everything connected with her was a matter of the deepest interest to Susan, and she felt for her sorrows and anxieties almost as much as if they had been her own. She considered herself quite justified in picking up as much information as possible, by every available means.

Having finished writing a prescription, Mr. Hume turned from the table, and sat pondering.

"A bad case," he said,— "a very bad case. If he doesn't get a change, he won't be alive in a month. Plenty of nourishment and a mild climate are his only chance. And yet what is the good of suggesting it? they don't seem to have enough to keep body and soul together. It's plainly my duty to tell her, though. They may have some kind friends. They have evidently known better days. It is sickening to think of the contrasts of this great city. A tenth part of what a city company squanders on a dinner, or a West End magnate on a ball, would save this man's life."

The thought troubled him, yet he was powerless to avert the evil. He rose from his chair as Lady Deverell entered.

"He is better now," she said; and then, with a voice which all her efforts could not keep from faltering, "Mr. Hume, I want you to tell me what you really think of him."

"Will you sit down, Mrs. Morley?" he replied, handing her a chair.

Even the request was a bad omen: it seemed like a desire to gain time; perhaps, too, she noticed a little hesitation in his manner, arising rather from a dislike to inflict pain, than

a shrinking from a positive duty. She insisted the more strongly.

"You will tell me the whole truth? I cannot bear this suspense."

She pressed back the hair from her forehead, with a hurried, nervous action, and sat leaning her arm upon the table.

"I had made up my mind to do so," Mr. Hume replied. "Although this is a duty which devolves on us almost daily, it is none the less painful. I think his state is most critical."

"You think him in great danger?"

"In imminent danger."

She sank back in her chair with a half-stifled moan; then recovered herself quickly.

"Forgive me, Mr. Hume, but—I have had so much to try me lately, and—indeed, I was not quite—prepared for this."

The words came in broken sentences. Her heart felt crushed; but the spirit was battling bravely still. The doctor went on quietly.

"I thought it my duty to tell you the worst; but I may qualify my opinion by saying that a warmer climate and plenty of nourishment might yet restore him."

"What would you recommend?" she asked, eagerly.

"Under other circumstances, I should say Madeira or the South of France. Failing these, Torquay, or even the Isle of Wight."

"And you think this would save him?"

Her very life seemed to hang upon the reply. She leaned forward with her lips parted, and a world of eager inquiry in her eyes. The doctor's habitual caution, however, qualified the answer.

"With careful management and good nursing, it might work wonders."

She sat back again, only half satisfied.

"It must be done," she said; "he *must* be saved!"

Mr. Hume went on:

"We have not, as a rule, much time to waste in sympathy, but I feel an unusual interest in this case. May I make this my excuse for asking if I am right in my supposition that you have seen what is called better days?"

"Yes."

"And that you have friends well-to-do?"

"Yes."

"In such a crisis as the present, might I venture to suggest an appeal to those friends?"

The question seemed to arouse her from the painful reverie into which she was falling. She spoke hurriedly:

"It is quite impossible. The only friend to whom I could appeal—my husband's oldest friend—is abroad; I fear, dying. For the rest, I could not bring myself to appeal to them. Even if I could, my husband would never consent."

"We will put Madeira out of the question, then. The Isle of Wight might be accomplished for a few pounds,—say twenty. I infer from what I have observed that you have some occupation. May I ask the nature of it?"

"You may. It is, at least, an honest calling." She drew herself up a little proudly, as if in defense of the revelation she was about to make. "I am—an artist's model."

In spite of himself, Mr. Hume could not repress a start.

"Is it possible! *You?*" he exclaimed.

"You are surprised. The calling implies degradation in the minds of many. There is no reason why it should. Indeed, it is an injustice to many a virtuous woman. You have confessed to an interest in me. Will you hear my story? I feel that I *must* have some friend in this emergency, and I know I may rely on you."

"Indeed you may," Mr. Hume responded, warmly. "I am only too anxious to help you."

With a look of thanks Lady Deverell continued.

"We have, as you surmised, seen better days. My husband was wealthy,—very wealthy; but through the wickedness of a trusted agent he was robbed of all he possessed. My husband is a proud man. He might have saved a competence from the wreck of his fortune had he been less honorable; he could only save his honor by the sacrifice of all. That sacrifice was made, even to my poorest jewels. Only a few pounds were left us, which he hoped would enable us to subsist until he could obtain some employment. That hope was frustrated by this fatal illness. The small sum we had saved rapidly dwindled. I saw it could not last many weeks. My husband became too ill to be conscious of this, and I dared not tell him, for I knew that anxiety for me was his greatest trouble. I concealed the fact; for the first time in my life I deceived him, intending to confess all when what I looked upon as a temporary ailment should have passed."

"It was the wisest course you could adopt. But what of yourself?" interrupted the surgeon.

"I will tell you," she resumed. "My husband grew rapidly worse. I need not dwell on the miserable moments that followed,—with ruin staring me in the face, and, through it all, the necessity of preserving a smile for him when my heart felt ready to break. I looked about for some occupation. My needle was naturally my first thought, as it is with thousands of gentlewomen reduced to indigence and toil. I found the market overstocked. If I toiled from morning to night I could scarcely earn a bare subsistence for myself, much less for a sick husband who demanded half my time. I had a little talent for music, which I thought I might turn to account. I spent more in advertisements than I could have earned in a month, but there was not a single response: the market was overstocked. I am only telling you the history of thousands; but none can ever understand, except those who have gone



through this experience, the bitterness of being crowded out in the struggle for bare existence."

She paused a moment, with a hard—almost a defiant—look in her face, the outcome of untold suffering.

Mr. Hume passed his hand before his eyes.

"I know it only too well," he said. "My experience has brought me into contact with many such cases, but none more painful than yours. Let me hear the rest."

"One day, almost worn out with anxiety and watching, and the agony of hope deferred, I fainted in the street. A well-known artist, who had been our guest in happier days, happened to be passing. He recognized me, and took me in a cab to his house. It was impossible to conceal from him my circumstances, and, with all the generosity of his artist nature, he at once pressed help on me. I told him that even if I could bring myself to accept it my husband never would consent, and I could not disobey him in a matter in which he had laid on me his express commands, but I entreated him to find me some occupation. In the most delicate manner he suggested that I might be of use to him in sitting for a picture he was finishing, and that I might receive the money he would otherwise pay to some one else. A light broke in upon me; I seized on the occupation as a means of rescue from despair. Seeing my determination, my friend procured me as much employment as I wanted, so I went on hiring out my face and hands at a shilling an hour."

"My dear Mrs. Morley, what a pittance!" Mr. Hume exclaimed.

"It was a fortune compared with what I could earn by my needle," she answered, with a bitter smile. "Let me, in justice to those with whom I was brought into contact, say that they would many of them have pressed more on me. I felt it became a favor, and declined: so I let myself out at the market price. To the further credit of my employers, let me

say that never once have I met with an insult or even a slight. Whether they suspected the truth, I know not, but my very poverty seemed to win me their respect."

She drew herself up somewhat proudly, with the dignity of infinite suffering.

"And your husband knows nothing of this?" Mr. Hume said.

"He must never know," she returned, quickly, and with a look of alarm. "He believes—heaven pardon me for the deception!—that I am engaged in teaching. Happily, a few hours' work each day brings in a bare subsistence for both, and I can devote the rest of my time to him."

There was a silence for a few minutes; then the surgeon rose. When he next spoke, his voice was tremulous with emotion.

"Mrs. Morley, I am unfortunately a poor man; I have still a hard struggle before me. In truth, I have always made my desire for wealth subservient to the interest I take in my profession. But I tell you candidly that I have never felt my inability to be generous so keenly as I do now."

He turned away suddenly, and took his hat from the table. She responded without looking up.

"I believe you, and from my heart I thank you. But even if you could help me I could not accept your help. I must end this fight as I have commenced it,—alone. Suppose I accepted money from 'friends,' she continued, "the money would come to an end; and what then? Could I go on subsisting on charity? No. Some other means *must* be found. You say a change to the Isle of Wight might save him?"

"Very possibly. These cold London fogs are killing him."

She seemed to shrink at the last words, and pressed her white hands upon her forehead. Then she looked up suddenly.

"Is this change necessary at once?"

He still spoke without turning towards her. He felt that

his words were like a sentence of death, and he could not bear to witness the pain he inflicted.

"You know I would not willingly distress you," he said, "but a delay, even of a few days, may be fatal."

He half repented that he had uttered the words, there was such a concentrated agony in the half-suppressed moan which broke from her lips. He came to her side.

"Forgive me for inflicting so much pain on you, but it is always advisable to be prepared for the worst."

She rose and put out her hand.

"Mr. Hume, from my inmost heart I thank you for your candor,—for your kind, generous sympathy. I must not keep you any longer, and—I want time to think over what you have said. Heaven may yet send some means of saving him. You see," she added, with a faint smile, "I have become so inured to trouble that I can debate the matter calmly."

It was a feeble attempt to reassure him as to her ability to bear her heavy trial; but to the man whose life was passed amid every phase of human suffering, there was more sorrow in the smile than in the anguish he had seen upon her face when he made the fatal announcement.

"Good-by," he said, clasping her hand in both his own, "and heaven grant that help may come to you quickly, for you deserve it if ever woman did. I shall see you early to-morrow. Send for me to-day if there is a change for the worse. Any medical skill I possess I place at your service only too willingly. Would to God I could do more!"

She could only thank him with a look of gratitude, and sank into a chair again as he left the room.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## TEMPTATION.

FOR a long time she sat immovable, with an utter desolation at her heart which she had never felt before. Until the fatal announcement was made, she had been buoyed up with hope that in time her husband's malady would pass away. We can never admit the belief, until it is forced upon us, that the thing we value beyond all earthly treasures is to be torn from us by the stern hand of resistless fate. Even if our fears tend that way, we are prone to think that the parting will not be to-day or to-morrow, or even a few months hence. Although we see the "angel with the amaranthine wreath" pause and descend on many a startled home immediately around us, we still think he will pass us by, and respond to our heartfelt yearnings by granting us another spell of happiness in the companionship of the one so dearly loved. With Lady Deverell, however, the truth could no longer be denied.

"Is this some hideous dream?" she said, recovering at last from the stupor which the shock had caused. "Have I not known misery and privation enough in these last sad months, but I must be brought face to face with this stern, awful fact? Oh, Arthur, my love, my darling, can it be possible that a few short days may end all our happiness? It cannot be; I *cannot* believe it. And yet his words only confirm my fears. I see the truth in the worn cheeks, in the sunken eyes, in the poor pale lips. It must not—shall not be!" she cried, starting up in a sudden outburst of despair. "Oh, how the folly of my past life comes back upon me! A sum that I wasted over

and over again on a wretched trinket or a useless dress might save his life. *His life!*—who is all in all to me; dearer far than life itself. And, yet, what can I do? what can I do?"

Again she sank down in the utter agony of despair, and buried her face in her hands. As she did so, the faithful Susan glided into the room, and stood looking at her silently. Once more the burning fever of desire to hit upon some device aroused Lady Deverell into action. She rose suddenly, and paced the room with rapid steps, and with her eyes intent upon the ground.

"Twenty pounds!" she exclaimed. "Twenty pounds! to save a life more precious than all the wealth of the world! It must be had! some way it *must* be had, or I shall go mad!"

Suddenly she perceived Susan standing motionless by the doorway.

"What do you do there? How dare you come in when you are not summoned?" she demanded, her natural sweetness quite deserting her under the accumulated pressure of her grief and the thought of its being intruded upon.

"Oh, mum, forgive me," cried Susan, clasping her hands. "I know'd you was in trouble, and I couldn't bear to think you was alone."

In another moment Susan was kneeling beside her mistress, who lay back in her chair utterly prostrate. The sympathy she so sorely needed had come when her agony had reached its climax, and changed her anger to a flood of tears.

"Oh, forgive me, Susan," she sobbed, putting out her hand. "I am almost beside myself with grief."

The humble housemaid took the fair hand and kissed it, and held it to her bosom with a grace that true feeling alone can impart.

"Please don't ye give way, mum," she said, half sobbing herself. "Let me try and help you; let us set to work and think. Come, there's a dear lady."

The kindly words had the desired effect. Lady Deverell rose from her chair, and paced slowly up and down the room.

"There, I am better now," she said.

Suddenly she paused with a surprised look before the bouquet of flowers which Susan had brought into the room while the doctor was in the bedroom.

"What flowers are these?" she asked.

"The flowers Mr. Herbert sent you, mum."

"Mr. Herbert? who is Mr. Herbert?" Lady Deverell asked, in surprise.

"The artist what has the ground-floor, mum. Buttons's master."

"And why does he send flowers to me, pray?"

Her position made her unusually sensitive. She fancied it was a liberty, and was ready to resent it in a moment.

"Oh, I forgot to give his message," Susan replied. "He knew Mr. Morley was ill, and sent them with his compliments, as he thought the gentleman might like them."

The loving wife was melted in a moment.

"He sent them to my husband!—that is very kind of him. Tell him I thank him most sincerely."

Susan had already decided on her course of action. The favorable reception of the flowers was a point gained, and she ventured a step further. Humble as she was, she knew she was on delicate ground; but her love for Lady Deverell inspired her with a courage, and with a tact as well, which might have been emulated by many who possessed more advantages of birth and education.

"Ah, mum," she continued, mysteriously, "you should see his pictures!" Then, in a low, confidential tone, "He's a painting a Godiva, mum!"

"Godiva?" repeated Lady Deverell, with a slightly awakened curiosity.

"Yes, mum. She as rode naked through Coventry to save

the people from the income-tax!" said poor Susan, jumbling up the chief grievance of the present day with the unjust impost upon the poor of old. "And a noble woman, too, Mr. Herbert says; but I say I'd rather her than me. I wonder she didn't die of rheumatics!"

Lady Deverell had fallen into a state of abstraction again. The delicate attention of the artist to her husband, and the reference to his picture by the servant-girl, had roused her only for a moment. Her grief was too intense to be long diverted.

"Twenty pounds!—only twenty pounds!" she muttered, in a low tone, as she sat down again and rested her cheek upon her hand.

Susan looked at her a moment as if endeavoring to make up her mind for a bold effort. She passed slowly behind Lady Deverell's chair, and, leaning over her shoulder, said, in a low voice,—

"There's more ways than one of getting twenty pounds, mum."

The words seemed to fall like an echo to her thoughts on the car of the distracted wife. She started, and turned suddenly.

"What do you mean?" she asked, with wondering anxiety in her gaze.

Susan had made the fatal plunge, but now that she had done so she felt half frightened at her own temerity. She, however, went on speaking rapidly.

"Well, mum, you'll please to 'scuse me, for I know you're a real lady born and bred; but Mr. Herbert heard somewhere that you was a model, and he said he wanted you to set to him. He's a coming up this morning."

"Well?"

"Well, mum,—but you won't be angry with me?"

"No, no; go on."

A wild desire to know in what way this information was

connected with the coveted twenty pounds seemed to urge her on. Her eagerness emboldened Susan to proceed. The maid leaned over her shoulder, and whispered a few rapid words in her ear. As she did so, a deep blush spread instantly over Lady Deverell's face and neck and bosom. For an instant, astonishment held her dumb; then indignation, fierce and burning, succeeded, and she started up glowing from head to foot with righteous anger.

"How dare you?" she cried; "how dare you speak to me in this way? Leave the room instantly."

Susan, aghast and crest-fallen, stepped back a pace or two.

Lady Deverell went on:

"The insult! Oh! is there no one to protect me? Do you hear me? Leave the room."

It was too much for the poor housemaid. Her motive had been so honest, her desire so earnest, that to be thus misjudged was too much for her. She burst into tears.

"I only did it to try and help you," she sobbed, with her apron to her eyes, as she slowly left the room.

"Is it come to this?" cried Lady Deverell, looking wildly round, as if for some resource in her extremity. "Oh, the wretchedness of poverty! I cannot even resent this insult by leaving the house. I dare not tell him—it would be the death of him. Oh! what shall I do? what shall I do?"

She sank down with her head upon the table, utterly worn out. As she did so, the bedroom door opened, and Sir Arthur came out and advanced towards her.

"Katie!" he exclaimed, in a low tone.

In an instant she had started up and stood looking at him in wild alarm. She was too startled, by his coming so suddenly upon her, to be able to utter a single word. He could not understand it.

"Why, what is the matter, darling?" he asked, in evident amazement.



"Matter," she echoed, recovering herself a little. "Oh, nothing. I declare, I think I was falling asleep—ha, ha, ha! How very absurd, was it not? I'm so glad you came to rouse me. Fancy my falling asleep with my head on the table! How very ridiculous!"

If she had died on the spot, she would not have let him see her anxiety. He was not half satisfied, however.

"I thought I heard you cry. You quite frightened me."

"Did I? Oh, I'm so sorry! I—I must have been dreaming—I think I was."

"Why, you look quite excited and feverish," he persisted. "What does it all mean?"

She was more herself by this time, and could act her difficult part better, though her heart felt as if breaking.

"Did I? It is only your fancy, dear. You are much too anxious about me. I feel quite well,—perfectly well."

The angels themselves might envy the sacrifice of that lie, so uttered in her extremity.

"You woke me up suddenly, you know," she continued. "But, oh, Arty, how wrong of you to get up again! I thought you were sleeping."

"I have been asleep; your cry roused me."

"Oh, I am so sorry! forgive me, darling." She gave a wild look towards the door. "If he should come now," she muttered to herself, "what should I do? Come, Arty, you must go back, like a good boy. I will not be disobeyed, you know. Ha, ha, ha! fancy my falling asleep upon the table! I was rather restless last night."

She was working herself into a fever of anxiety to get him away again; but he still lingered, as though reluctant to leave her.

"Come, Arty. I have a dozen things to do,—shopping, and all sorts of things,—and you must not detain me."

"Well, I will obey you," he said, at length. "I feel very

weak. You must get your shopping done, and then give yourself some rest. You don't look at all well."

She had got him to the door of the bedroom by this time. Her strength was almost gone.

"Good-by," she said. "Be sure you lie down until I come back."

She closed the door, and then the life passed fairly out of her, and she slid down helpless on the floor, with her head against the door. She lay there panting like a hunted hare for five minutes or more; then the necessity for action again aroused her. Was she never to be defeated, this loving wife? Would the love which was her very being uphold her yet through further long-drawn trials?

"Thank heaven for that, at least!" she said. "Thank God they did not meet! How wretchedly ill he looks! Is there *no* resource? I cannot see him die like this: it is too fearful."

Suddenly, as a corpse is brought to life by an electric current, a thrill seemed to pass through her frame. She started up, her whole frame quivering.

"And yet—to save him! *to save him!* Yes, yes, it shall be done; it shall be done. Arthur, my love, my darling, you *shall* be saved!—but, oh, the shame! the degradation! God help me! what shall I do?"

At this instant the door opened, and a gentleman quietly entered the room. He started as his eye fell on Lady Deverell, and stood silent a moment. She turned on him quickly: there was no concealing her emotion, and she was conscious of it.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" she demanded.

"I beg your pardon," the gentleman replied. "I knocked twice, and thought there was no one here. I intended to leave this note. I am an artist; my name is Herbert."

Was her invocation to a higher power answered in this way? It seemed so. The power to struggle against her fate had

gone out of her. She felt dazed and bewildered by the tangled maze, and allowed herself to drift whither the tide of fate seemed bearing her. As the name passed the stranger's lips, she seemed like one turned to stone.

"The die is cast," she muttered: "I accept my fate."

---

## CHAPTER XX.

### A WOMAN'S SACRIFICE.

THE dull morning light was stealing into the room where the sick man lay,—a cold, cheerless light, which only came to reveal the wretched atmosphere of the London attic,—an atmosphere heavy with the smoke-laden fog and frost of winter in the metropolis,—an atmosphere more pitiless than the deadly weapons of opposing armies; which slays its countless victims, already prostrate with disease; which comes like a curse upon those who are unable to meet it with the matchless shield of health.

Lady Deverell sat by the bedside of the sufferer, as she had sat, with scarcely an interval of repose, for three nights and days. The doctor's injunctions, careful nursing and nourishment, must be obeyed as far as lay in her power; but with respect to both, she felt that the bitter end was approaching. Her own bodily strength was failing; her scanty means were wellnigh exhausted. She had been unable to leave her husband's side for any engagement. She dared not remain away from the house. The cough was enough to tear the sufferer to pieces. The rupture of another vessel would be fatal, unless help were immediately summoned.

"The cough is killing me," moaned the sick man. "If I could only get an hour's rest! This wretched fog,—it chokes me! I cannot get my breath. Lift me up."

She managed to raise him on the pillow, but even this slight movement brought on another attack.

"Wine," he feebly muttered, when it had somewhat subsided.

She hastened to the table, and raised the bottle. There was not another drop in it. A look of despair came upon her face. She had given the stimulant at intervals through the night without noticing how rapidly it diminished. She returned to the bedside.

"I am sorry to say I have no more, dear. I will get you some tea as soon as Susan is down."

He turned away from her with a look of disappointment. Weakness made him unreasonable.

"You should have had some in last night," he said. "It was thoughtless of you to forget it, considering the state that I am in."

The words cut her like a knife. She took her purse from her pocket: it only contained a few silver coins,—her only barrier between positive starvation for herself and for him. What wonder that the iciness of despair crept upon her heart at last? Her husband spoke again.

"Cover me up. I am chilled to the bone."

She had placed upon the bed the whole of the scanty bedding with which they were supplied. She looked round the room. An old dress and her own shawl were upon a chair. She brought these and spread them upon the bed. Another violent fit of coughing succeeded. Again the sick man sank back quite exhausted.

Susan entered the room softly, and stole at once to the bed. Since the time she had been dismissed from the room she had not relaxed in her exertions to aid the unfortunate husband

and wife, but she had said little to the latter. She seemed even more diligent, however, in her exertions to alleviate the sufferings of the former.

"We shall want some coals, Susan. The fire is almost out."

"Please, mum, the coals is out too," was the answer.

Again that look of blank despair came into the wife's face. She felt driven onwards to a point beyond human endurance, but she said not a word yet.

"Make the kettle boil down-stairs, and bring it up as soon as you can."

"Yes, mum."

A long interval passed. At length the scanty breakfast was brought up. Some tea was held to Deverell's lips. He turned away from it, testily.

"Sleep, sleep!—I want sleep," he muttered. "Oh, God! if I could only get some sleep!"

He closed his eyes. He was in the last stage of exhaustion: a corpse could hardly have appeared more livid.

Susan stood by the bedside, and looked at him a moment. Then she went to Lady Deverell, who was placing the tray upon the table. She pointed to the bed.

"I didn't mean to say no more, but I *must*. You ain't a-going to let him lay there and die?"

The woman she addressed had been battling with the subject for a week. She knew the fate that was over her, but she had resisted it day after day, hour after hour. The fatal moment had come at last.

"No, I am not. If I sacrificed my soul, he should be saved."

She went to the chimney-piece, and took from it a bottle labeled "Chloral Hydrate." She poured out a small quantity, mixed it with water, and held it to the patient's lips.

"Swallow it, dearest," she said. "It will give you rest."

He yielded to the last word, and took the draught. His wife turned to Susan.

"I shall watch him till he sleeps, and then leave the bell-rope near his hand. Can you listen for the bell, and come up if he should ring?"

"Yes. To help you I will come up every half-hour,—*now*."

The last word was meant to intimate that she would make any sacrifice for the woman who so sacrificed herself for one she loved.

"God will reward you, Susan," was the answer.

When she was left alone, she sat down by the bedside again. After a time, the labored breathing of the patient grew calmer. He slept.

Then she rose up and prepared to depart. She looped up the long masses of her rich golden hair, but paused suddenly with a shudder, and forbore to fasten the tresses too securely. Next she took one more look at the sleeper, and knelt for a few brief moments by the bedside. Then, with a face as white as hers who "built herself an everlasting name" in Coventry of old, she passed silently from the room.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SUNSHINE ON THE SEA.

A FINE day on the southern coast of England. A day of endless sunshine. A fragment of the departed summer, blown back from the other hemisphere by the gales of the last month, to refresh our eyes and hearts. A day to drive care from the inmost corners of the heart and brain; to pour oxygen into the lungs until the vital functions burst the bounds of daily

routine, and make us feel that we could run, leap, shout, or do any wild thing on these warm, sienna sands, from the exuberant vitality of pure existence.

Under the low cliffs at Ventnor, the sea lazily lapped the fallen fragments of rock, and the variegated pebbles on the beach. Orange sea-weed swayed idly in the tide. The sunlight lay like a pathway of diamonds stretching far out to the distant sea-line, where the ships, with drooping sails, drifted slowly on through the light haze which floated far down the Channel track. All Nature basked in that glorious sunlight, and seemed to be taking a siesta after the stormy turmoil of the winter days.

So thought Sir Arthur Deverell as he lay on the beach, well wrapped up, and looked out over the broad blue expanse before him. His wife sat by his side, happy in his enjoyment. She was busy with some needle-work, which did not, however, prevent her casting now and then an anxious glance at the pale cheek of her husband, or pausing occasionally to re-arrange the rug upon which he lay, and draw closer the warm wrapper round his throat.

"This is heaven," Sir Arthur said, lying quite back, and looking straight up into the clear sky overhead. "If heaven is anything like this, I don't care how soon I go there."

"Oh, Arthur! It pains me to hear you talk in that way: it is like irreverence; and we ought to be so thankful now we are here."

"It is not irreverence, darling. We none of us know what it is really like, and I say again, emphatically, I should be satisfied if it were like this."

"You think so now because of the change from those dreadful streets; but, remember, you did not value such a scene as this when you could always have it. Even this would pall in time. We appreciate earthly joys by contrasts. There must be something more in the joys of immortality."

"If this is not heaven, you are an angel, any way, and I can only say, God bless you for all your goodness, Katie. I don't think," he added, "that I *did* rightly appreciate the blessings I had before. We are all too apt to consider them our due, even when they are not fairly earned by lawful labor. Perhaps that is why they were taken away."

There was a tone of sadness in the last words, which at once caught the ear of the wife.

"Never mind," she said, quickly. "We won't think of that now. You must forget the past and enjoy the present, and get well as fast as possible."

She applied herself diligently to her work. He picked up some pebbles, and began throwing them into the clear waves which were creeping slowly towards their feet over the patches of sand below the pebbly ridge. Suddenly he desisted.

"Katie," he said, "how did you get the money to come here?"

It was fortunate for her that his eyes were intent on a distant ship, which seemed to have caught a breeze out on the horizon. Her face flushed to almost as deep a tint as the crimson wool she held in her hand, then she grew deadly pale; her hand trembled, and she lost all power of utterance.

"Don't you hear, Katie?" he repeated. "How did you get the money to come here?"

She was beginning to recover her powers of speech, though her voice was forced and unnatural.

"By dint of hard work and economy, dear," she answered.

"Economy indeed!" he went on. "Starvation diet, as far as you were concerned, I know. I don't believe you told me a tithe of what you suffered in that horrible place. You must have managed very cleverly, Katie, to have pulled us through as you did. I don't half understand it now."

Every word he uttered sent a new thrill of terror through her. It seemed like treading on the brink of her secret; and



a feeling of deadly sickness crept over her, so that she had hardly power to sit erect.

"Do not talk about it, dear. I wish to draw a veil over that time, and to enjoy the delightful present. Promise me you will not refer to it again."

"Yes, if you wish. It was a horrible time, truly. But it is good for me to think of it, for it reminds me of all you have done for me, my darling."

He turned towards her, and took her hand.

"What a sweet little hand!" he continued; "thinner than it was, but still a model for a painter or sculptor."

She snatched it away suddenly with an impulse impossible to restrain, while a deep flush again mounted to her forehead.

This time he could not avoid seeing it, for he was looking full in her face. He half rose from his recumbent posture, surprised and pained.

"Why, Katie, you used not to dislike those endearing expressions. Is my admiration no longer acceptable?"

A fortunate accident came to her aid.

"You do not see those two horrid-looking men staring at us from the cliff," she said, hurriedly.

"True," he answered, turning towards the spot where they stood. "Still, you need not be so upset by a pair of grinning East-Enders, though they do take us for a couple of lovers. I had forgotten that the Isle of Wight is not quite so secluded as our more remote Devonshire nooks. Do you mean to say," he continued, after a pause, "that we are to live like 'real gentlefolks' while we are here? It seems quite a joke, after all we have gone through."

"That subject again! Remember your promise."

"Ah, well, I had forgotten; but is it really to be so?"

"For a time at least, perhaps always, for I hope in a few weeks you will be well, and then you can do many things, and I shall be able to do much more myself when I see the

good old healthy brown in your cheeks again. A week of this sunshine will work wonders. Will you try to walk a little? The doctor said you should."

"Yes, if you wish; but I must have your arm."

She helped him to rise, and, gathering up the wraps, gave him her arm.

They went on slowly along the sunny shore, the waves laughing at their feet, the white gulls soaring high in the cloudless ether, and the fresh sea-fragrance filling the air around with health and its concomitant blessings. As the wife had said, a week of this sunshine would work wonders. Even now his cheek was beginning to glow, and his step was firmer than it had been for many a long day; while the thought of this almost made the tender wife forget the dreadful ordeal she had so recently undergone, and which seemed to her now like a terrible dream, from which she had but just awakened.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

### STORM AND DARKNESS.

BUT the sunshine was not to be. Our treacherous winter climate cannot be trusted for a day. The next morning brought a strong southeaster that sent the salt spray in blinding sheets against the window of their little lodging, which stood upon the cliff to the west of the small bay of Ventnor. The rain poured down in torrents the whole day long. Now and then a slight break in the dark masses of cloud, which hung like a pall over the sea, revealed the writhing waves, literally beaten down by the gale, which hissed and howled and moaned for admittance at every door and window, and

which no amount of precaution from those within could wholly exclude.

Ships under close-reefed topsails standing up channel had a hard fight that day to bear up to windward, so as to clear the island. Fishing-boats under a scrap of canvas fought it out as long as they could, and then ran for shelter to the nearest port. Huge steamers, homeward bound, built to defy all ordinary gales, labored heavily, and shipped green seas until all signs of life disappeared from the deck, except the lookout and the men at the wheel. Night fell on a howling, roaring, screaming tumult of rocks and waves and winds, and laboring ships, which it was a mercy the darkness shut from the sight, for on the pitiless headlands of our English coast many a home was made desolate that night, and many a rich cargo lay scattered over miles of sea-weed-laden rocks.

Another day. The wind had gone down somewhat, but the rain, brought by the breeze which had shifted more to the west, still fell in unceasing torrents. The first day, with its storm and tempest, had yielded enough of interest to Sir Arthur to beguile the time; though, even with the excitement of this storm, it was tedious work to sit all day in a small room watching the leaden sky and leaden sea without, when the previous day had been so full of sunshine and promise. The dull monotony which followed was a trial to his patience which, in his weakness, made him petulant and unhappy.

He dragged himself feebly from window to fire, from fire to window, a hundred times. He pressed his forehead against the cold damp glass, straining his eyes to windward, in the vain hope of detecting a brighter gleam. He tapped the homely weather-glass at intervals of half an hour, but at each tap it went resolutely downwards, until hope itself seemed to desert him, and he seated himself gloomily by the fire.

"Confound it, Katie," he exclaimed, "we might as well have stayed where we were, as come down here for this sort

of thing. The houses did shelter us in London; here the wind seems to cut you to pieces."

A bitter pang shot through the wife's heart as she heard these words and thought of the cruel sacrifice she had made to achieve this end. But the disappointment lay heavy on her own heart too, and so she excused him.

"Never mind, dear. We may have sunshine to-morrow."

"Not a bit of it. Look at the glass. It's down to 'much rain.' Do put away that work, Katie. Read to me a bit."

The objectionable work, which was scarcely ever laid aside, so that by means of it she might prolong their sojourn on the coast, was at once relinquished, and she brought one of his favorite books and commenced reading. With the restlessness of weakness, he only listened for a short time, and then sauntered again to the window. She went on, however, hoping to interest him and draw his thoughts away from the gloomy weather. Suddenly he said,—

"It's awfully tedious sitting in here for two whole days. It doesn't rain much now, and the wind is falling. I think I shall go out."

"Arthur," she cried, rising, with consternation in her face, "you must not think of such a thing."

"Why not? I can wrap up well. It won't do me a bit of harm if I don't get wet. You can put on your water-proof, and help me down to the beach. They're drawing a net there; I should like to see them."

In vain she entreated. It only made him more obstinate. His long illness had made him like a spoiled child. With a heavy heart, she set to work to take every precaution to shield him as much as possible from the still searching wind; and then, drawing on her own somewhat scanty waterproof, she prepared to accompany him. The landlady, who was in the passage when they emerged, looked aghast when she heard Sir Arthur's intention.

"Why, it'll be the death of you, sir!" the good woman exclaimed; "and it's not fit weather for the lady to go out, either."

"Oh, nonsense! It'll do us both good," was the petulant rejoinder.

A biting gust of wind, as they issued from the house, somewhat shook his belief, however. A shiver passed through his frame. His wife observed it in an instant.

"There, Arty! I knew you would feel it," she exclaimed, anxiously.

"Oh, it is nothing, only just the first coming out. We sha'n't feel it below the cliffs. It cuts rather keenly over here."

They went down the winding path to the beach, and, seeking the shelter of a fishing-boat drawn up on the shingle, watched the fishermen hauling in the net containing the few stray denizens of the deep, which a chance haul sometimes brought them in the stormy winter-time.

"I am very comfortable here, Katie," he said, when they had sat some time in silence. "Would you mind walking on to the library to see if the newspapers are come?"

"What! and leave you here alone, Arty?"

"Why not? I shall be all right. You won't be gone long. Don't fidget about me so much, dear."

What could she say in answer? She saw that opposition would irritate him. With a heavy heart she went on her way along the esplanade.

"Not much luck this time," said Sir Arthur to the tarpaulined, heavy-booted fisherman, who threw the last fish into a maund with a somewhat discontented air.

"No, sir; not much doing in our line in weather like this. They seem to be having better luck over yonder," he added, looking with envious eyes along the beach to the westward.

Sir Arthur rose and passed round the boat, so as to look in

the same direction. About a quarter of a mile away several men and boys seemed busily engaged in filling baskets from a seine-boat which had just come in. Without further reflection the invalid started off towards the spot.

"I can be back before she returns," he said, as if to quiet his conscience with regard to the alarm he knew his wife would feel when she found he had departed from the sheltered spot where she had left him.

It was a long bit of rough walking for one in his condition. The wind was in his face, and, in spite of every precaution, the rain penetrated his clothing here and there. Once or twice he repented his resolve, but the spot did not seem far distant, and it was a sheltered one. Before he reached it, however, he paused in dismay. The loving arm which was always ready to help him was sadly missed. He was weaker than he thought. He sat down, damp and fatigued, on a fragment of rock. A chill seemed to strike to his very heart. He rose, and began to retrace his steps. A feeling of faintness came over him. He sat down again, this time on the shingle. He strove to rise again, and failed. His eyes closed; he lay back half insensible on the wet beach, with the rain falling on him, and the rising wind hissing above his prostrate form.

So, with a wild terror in her eyes, and a dull pain at her heart, she found him ten minutes after. Ten fatal minutes to him, for the next day he was unable to rise from his bed, and all her hopes and her terrible sacrifice had been in vain.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SNATCHED FROM DEATH.

WHAT was to be done? The careful instructions given by Mr. Hume in the event of a relapse had been strictly attended to, yet the patient grew worse. A local physician was called in, but his prescriptions were unavailing. Lady Deverell saw that the small sum of money so dearly earned was rapidly dwindling. A large slice of it had already gone to the new doctor, who was ignorant of his patient's financial position. The days were slipping rapidly by, and no change for the better appeared,—nothing to lighten the gloom which had again settled on the now almost despairing wife.

She was fairly beaten. Beyond the money now in her possession there was positively no resource. All her dark days of trial, all her struggles, all her sacrifice, had ended in this! Still she continued to maintain a cheerful countenance, and to talk hopefully while with her husband, though the effort to do so almost overtasked her strength.

Ten days passed, and things remained the same. The patient was rapidly getting weaker. The fever, resulting from the exposure he had undergone, had reduced him to a mere skeleton. His weakness was appalling. It was with difficulty he could lift his hand, and the amount of nourishment he could be induced to swallow was utterly inadequate to maintain his strength. She took the new physician aside, and questioned him closely. He was a keen man, but his experience had been comparatively limited, and he had not had the benefit of that intercourse with the leading men in the pro-

fession, which in London, and in other great centres of population, tends to sharpen the faculties of rival practitioners, and opens fresh fields of pathological research, the results of which are more startling than the outer world would be quite willing to credit.

He told her, as she anticipated, that he was seriously alarmed at her husband's condition, and considered his case a matter for consultation. Was there any second opinion in the place she would care to have, or would his former medical attendant be preferred?

She had thought often of Mr. Hume, in whose calm judgment she had such perfect reliance; but it was useless thinking of him now. Her means would not admit of her bringing him from London, and she could not ask him to undertake the journey at his own expense. So she shook her head sadly, and said she could only trust to the treatment now pursued.

The physician told her a crisis was at hand,—that the life of her husband hung upon a thread.

"If he does not rally by to-morrow," he said, "I fear you must prepare yourself for the worst. I do not quite like the responsibility. Will you allow me to bring Dr. Brown?"

"I will send you an answer in an hour," she replied.

The doctor departed, and she sat down to think, and to count her little hoard. Ten pounds was all that was left her,—ten pounds with which to face the gloomy future, with the certainty of a long illness, with the probability of something far worse. She knew that the fee of the doctor who had been named was a high one. To part with even one of those few golden coins was worse than parting with her life's blood, for they were necessary to the maintenance of a life far dearer than her own. She felt driven to desperation. There was but one resource: she would write to Mr. Hume.

She sent a message to the local practitioner to say she would defer a consultation with Dr. Brown until she had a reply



from her husband's former medical attendant. Then she sat down and wrote all the particulars of the illness to the kind London surgeon.

All that night she watched by the bedside in terrible anxiety. Sleep was the one thing needful to restore a healthy reaction in the patient, and sleep absolutely deserted his pillow. The morning found him weaker than he had ever been, and the wife still sat watching by the bedside while the slow hours dragged along. Her thoughts were on Mr. Hume, who about this time must be receiving her letter. Her hopes were centred in him. Would he come? She knew, if he could by any possibility get away, he would; but other patients, in as critical a state, might keep him in town. She had asked for a telegram, and, as the time drew near when she might expect it, her anxiety was almost more than she could bear. At last it came.

*"I cannot possibly start this morning. Will endeavor to do so by late train."*

The physician came at the usual hour. He shook his head in answer to her inquiry.

"We must hope for the best," he said.

She knew what this meant, and felt that his hope was small indeed. Still, her faith in Mr. Hume sustained her even in this extremity.

"You do not think there is immediate danger?" she said.

"No. He may linger for forty-eight hours, or even more. If a change for the better does not take place in that time, there is scarcely a hope. Have you no friend to whom you can send at a time like this?"

"No. I would rather be alone. The landlady is very good, and does all I wish."

"But you will injure yourself if you do not get some rest."

"If he recovers there is no fear for me. If he does not——"

She could not finish the sentence. She broke down utterly. She would have added, "it is of little moment," but grief choked her utterance. The doctor led her from the landing, where this conversation had taken place, to the sitting-room below.

"Let me advise you to get a little fresh air and some breakfast. You will be better able to attend to your duties," he said.

She shook her head sadly. There could be no relaxation for her unless her mind were relieved.

She found that Mr. Hume must arrive by ten o'clock, or he could not be with them until the morning. The thought of another night of anxious watching was terrible to her. The day wore slowly away. The evening brought her a letter from town. It was in Mr. Hume's handwriting. She tore it open, dreading a disappointment. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR MRS. MORLEY,—I send a line in addition to my telegram, to say that I will use every effort to be with you this evening. I *must* see some patients this morning. If their state were not so critical, I would start at once. Let it be understood that I come to you *as a friend*. I must insist on this. That walk in the rain was madness.

"Yours, in great haste,

"H. T. HUME."

To this was appended the following, the commencement of which, even in the midst of her grief, caused her to start with surprise.

"MY DEAR LADY DEVERELL,—Since writing the foregoing, a strange thing has happened. I have learned your secret, and have some startling news for you. Be of good cheer. If we can pull your good husband through, there is

a happy future before you. Not a word more, as I must catch the morning mail."

"What can he mean? How can he have discovered my secret?" she exclaimed, as she laid down the letter. "Thank heaven he is coming, however. God grant that he may not be too late!"

Ten o'clock brought the physician, who came at that hour to meet Mr. Hume. A messenger had been sent to the station, that there might be no unnecessary delay in reaching the house. As the clock struck the half-hour, there was a sound of wheels outside. Lady Deverell rushed from the room, and down to the front door. In another moment Mr. Hume was clasping her hands in his, and had almost to carry her to a seat. The physician was close behind her.

"How is he?" said Mr. Hume, in a low tone, as the doctor approached.

"Still living," was the only answer,—unheard by Lady Deverell.

"Can I go up at once?"

"Yes."

"You will stay here till we return, my dear Mrs. Morley. It is absolutely necessary; but I need hardly say I will not keep you in suspense a moment longer than I can help."

She only nodded her head in reply, and the two doctors left the room together.

They approached the bedside. The patient, propped up with pillows to ease the labored breathing, lay with closed eyes, to all appearance dying.

Mr. Hume placed his finger on the pulse. It was only just perceptible,—the mere feeble fluttering which precedes dissolution. Next he drew aside the clothing, and, placing a stethoscope over the heart, listened attentively. Then he tapped the chest lightly with his finger, again listening.

"Water in the pericardium," he said, at length, to the physician who stood opposite.

"Yes; it has defied all my efforts. I fear he cannot live out the night."

"Not half an hour, in his present state. He is dying now."

"Had we not better tell his wife? I only waited for you to confirm my opinion."

"Not yet."

The resolute surgeon drew a morocco case from his pocket, and, opening it, took out a small silver instrument with an ivory handle. It was as delicate almost as a needle, and sharpened to the finest point. It fitted into a sheath, also of silver, only just sufficiently large for the needle to pass through. One end of the sheath was beveled, and fitted closely round the needle at about the eighth of an inch from the point; the other end, near the ivory handle, was turned outward like the end of a stethoscope. This instrument is known by the name of a trocar.

With a face as calm as if he were putting a pin into a cushion, the surgeon passed the instrument in between the ribs of the patient, right over the heart, until it had penetrated to a certain depth. Then he withdrew his hand.

The instrument, which he had left in the flesh, was observed *to vibrate in unison with the movement of the heart*.

He had penetrated the pericardium,—the sac which contains the heart,—and had just touched the heart itself! It is well known that the heart may, under certain conditions, be touched, and even penetrated slightly, without absolute danger; and in this case it was a matter of life and death.

Having satisfied himself that the instrument had penetrated to a sufficient depth, Mr. Hume took the head of the needle between his finger and thumb, and drew it lightly out, leaving the sheath in the flesh.

As he did so, a thin stream of water flowed slowly out through the sheath. The two stood and watched.

Five minutes passed. The water continued to flow; the breathing grew less labored; the pulse quickened; signs of vitality reappeared in the face.

Five minutes more, and the patient opened his eyes. He fixed them with a strange dazed stare on Mr. Hume.

"My God, what a relief!" he said.

The voice was clear and calm, but the surgeon arrested him at once.

"Lie still!—do not speak! Your life depends on yourself now."

A look of gratitude was the only answer. The eyes closed again, and in ten minutes more Sir Arthur slept like a healthy infant.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A VISITOR AT THE COTTAGE.

ABOUT the same time that Sir Arthur was luxuriating on the beach at Ventnor, before that imprudent walk in the wet, a stranger made his appearance at the gate of the game-keeper's cottage, in the woods of Norton.

He was a man of some thirty years of age, possessing a well-knit frame, and a complexion browned to a mahogany tint by exposure to sun and air. His dress, consisting of a blue cloth pea-jacket, black trousers, and a round felt hat, had something suggestive of the sea about it, and there was an easy independence in his movements which might naturally lead one to conclude that the sea was his calling, or, at least, that he had just come from off a voyage. Indications were

also there that, in spite of his plebeian character, he had been a successful man. His clothes were new, and scrupulously clean; his hair and whiskers, though long, were carefully trimmed; on his finger flashed a ring containing a diamond of no mean quality; and his neat black tie, tied in the sailor's-knot fashion, was additionally secured by a gold pin, with a genuine nugget for a head, as large as a hazel-nut.

He was leaning with both arms upon the gate, looking around with an expression in which joy and sorrow were curiously mingled. The cigar which he had been smoking—the odor from which at once proclaimed the genuine Havana—had, in his abstraction, been allowed to go out, while the quick action of the back of his brown hand across his eyes indicated more than once that a tear had stolen unbidden from beneath his lashes.

The gamekeeper's wife came from the cottage door with a basket of linen, which she was about to hang out to dry on the line stretched across the garden. Perceiving the stranger, she paused a moment in some surprise, and then, advancing a few steps, said, in her broad Devonshire dialect,—

“What do 'ee plaze to want?”

The stranger roused himself from the reverie into which he had fallen, and, taking his arms off the gate, addressed the woman in reply.

“Well, I want a good many things, missus. In the first place,” he said, inspecting his defunct cigar, “I'll ask you to be so good as to give me a light, if it ain't troubling you too much.”

The woman eyed him somewhat suspiciously, but she could hardly refuse so simple a request. She set down her basket, and moved towards the cottage. That a foreign-looking man like this should be hanging about a lonely cottage in the absence of the master, she considered decidedly mysterious. She had no desire to encourage him more than she could avoid.

Possessing herself of a box of matches, she returned towards the gate. The stranger took them with a quiet "Thank you," struck one on the box, and, shielding it from the wind in the horny cavity of his hand,—without in the least regarding the flame that played full upon the palm,—he drew up his cigar again.

He handed back the box with a renewed "Thank you," took two or three more vigorous puffs, and then, staring the woman straight in the face, without appearing in the least offensive, said,—

"And what might your name be, now?"

The correct thing would have been for the woman to question *him*; and she felt it. The stranger, however, possessed that air of authority which is a frequent accompaniment of success, and she yielded the point.

"I be called Morcombe," she answered.

"And your husband is gamekeeper here, I reckon?"

"Ees, plaze sure."

"Is he in?"

Now, coming from a person less well-to-do in appearance, this question would have been alarming, but, with the quickness women usually display in noting any little particulars of costume, Mrs. Morcombe had taken in the facts of the diamond ring and the nugget; and as she was well advanced in years, and there were, moreover, no indications of the gay Lothario about the stranger, she gradually gained confidence. Divested of some of its dialect, which is tedious to the uninitiated, her answer was as follows:

"No. He be gone into Landport to-day to see Mr. Bulfinch."

"What, Bulfinch the lawyer?"

"Yes, him as bought Norton Towers, or, leastways, him as come into it."

The stranger gave a slight start, and turned his eyes full upon the woman.

"Bulfinch bought Norton Towers?" he repeated, in an amazed tone.

"Well, as good as bought it. It's his, anyway. They do say he had a heap of money on the place, and come into it that way. But I reckon you be a stranger in these parts, or you'd a knowed all that."

"Well, I am a stranger in one sense, but I used to know the place well when a boy. So Bulfinch has got Norton, has he? Well, he was always a clever old chap."

"Not so very old, neither," the woman responded. "'Tis the young Bulfinch I'm telling about, not the old one. He's been dead and gone this four year."

"Oh, the young Bulfinch is it?"

The correction did not seem of much importance to the speaker. It was the fact of a stranger being in the place of the Deverells which seemed to impress him.

He went on :

"And what's become of Sir Arthur?"

"Ah, that's more than I can say. I've heer'd tell that he's away in London trying to make a living somehow. But he's a proud man is Sir Arthur, and he won't take help from nobody, nor let 'em know where he is."

"I suppose he's got enough to keep him comfortably?"

Mrs. Morcombe shook her head. "I don't know much about it," she said, "but they do say that he hadn't a shilling when all was paid. My good man could tell you more. It was a bad day for him when Bulfinch became lord and master. There's never no pleasing the likes o' he. But maybe you're a friend of his. If so, I ask your pardon."

The stranger reassured her on this point, and mused for a short time. Mrs. Morcombe was anxious to get on with her work. Her confidence was quite restored by this time.

"Will you plaze to step in and rest a bit, while I put out the clothes?"



"No, I'm much obliged: my time's limited. So young Sir Arthur married Jim Price's daughter, I hear?" he added, utterly unconscious of Mrs. Morcombe's strong desire to pursue her labors.

"Ees; and a pretty couple they was, too. I mind the time well when she come here one morning with young Mr. Dev-erell. I didn't know 'em from Adam then. Old Lady Dev-erell, as perhaps you know, brought her up like her own child, and she was such a grand-looking lady when she came here on her fine horse with her young man by her side, that I should never have taken she for Jim Price's daughter. I see the often enough after. They was very kind to me always, and I do hear that she's Sir Arthur's only comfort now he's in trouble."

"Did you happen to know Jim Price?"

"Well, I never see much of him. I was away in service till I married my man, and he came from up Bideford way."

"And so you don't know where Sir Arthur is now?"

"No, nor nobody, 'cept Mr. Poulson the banker."

"Oh, Mr. Poulson's still alive, is he?"

"Ees, fay. He's a-living up at the house that belongs to Admiral Bolt, where Squire Somers used to live. Miss Somers, they tell me, is married to a great artis' up in London, and the admiral he be in foreign parts."

"And so Mr. Bulfinch is living at Norton Towers, is he?" said the stranger, returning to the subject which seemed to impress him most. "Queer changes, truly."

"No, he hain't living there yet, but I believe he will be afore long."

"Well, I mustn't keep you from your work. Thank you kindly for your information. Oh, there's one thing more I want to ask. Was James Price buried in the graveyard at Norton?"

"That's more than I can say, but I should think it likely."

Now I think of it, I believe I did see his grave there, but 'tis many years ago."

A stout boy of ten years had appeared on the scene during this colloquy. He was staggering under a heavily-laden basket, containing goods from the village, and he now stood with his basket resting against the rail, looking at the stranger.

"Your boy?" asked the latter, indicating the youth with a side-movement of his head.

"Ees, fay: my youngest."

The stranger put his hand in his pocket, and drew therefrom half a sovereign, which he held out towards the lad.

The boy could not believe his eyes. A shilling, or even a sixpence, would have been a startling present, but a real gold coin! It was too good to be true. So he only stood still and grinned.

"Take it, my man; you can buy yourself some toffy next time you go to the village."

Buy himself toffy! He could buy up shop, shopkeeper, and all for the amount offered him, he thought. He looked at his mother for instructions.

Mrs. Morcombe was a good-hearted soul, but she had a large family, and she always had an eye to business.

"Don't ee be shy, Peter; take what the gentleman offers ee."

The stranger had purchased promotion with the gold coin. He was raised from the ranks at once.

"I'm sure 'tis good of you, sir, to take notice of the boy. Thank you kindly. Why don't you thank the gentleman, Peter?"

Peter had taken the coin, but even yet he could scarcely realize his position. To have suddenly dropped into a fortune of this magnitude was too much to grasp all at once. Dim visions, too, of his mother's "taking care of it for him," flitted across his mind. Such a thing on a far smaller scale had

happened before, and the result, as far as Peter was concerned, was disastrous. He began to think a coin which required less "taking care of" would have suited him better. Nevertheless he touched his cap and thanked the gentleman as he was told.

The stranger said good-morning, and walked away through the wood towards Norton village.

Mrs. Morcombe continued to gaze at his retreating form with some curiosity. Then a thought suddenly struck her, and she called after him,—

"Will ee plaze to take a drink of cider, sir?"

The stranger turned in response to the call. The old sad expression was on his face again.

"No, thank you," he answered; "I'm going to take a walk round by the church, and shall get a bit of dinner in the village. Good-morning."

"Why, who ever can he be?" Mrs. Morcombe asked herself. "Lord bless my heart alive! to throw half-sovereigns about like that! He seems to know something of these parts, too. Perhaps the old man can tell me about un. Here, Peter, you'll be losing that half-sovereign, as sure as the day. Give it to mother, ducky, and she'll take care of it for you."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## AT LINCOLN'S INN.

Two days after his visit to the cottage, the nautical-looking stranger presented himself at the office of Messrs. Dawson and Poole, solicitors, of Lincoln's Inn.

He was the bearer of a letter from Mr. Poulson, the banker of Sandport, and Mr. Poole, the junior partner of the firm, at once requested that he might be shown up.

"Mr. Price, I believe?" said the solicitor, as the stranger entered.

"That's my name, sir."

"Pray take a seat, Mr. Price. Mr. Poulson informs me that you are desirous of consulting us on important business. May I ask its nature?"

"Does Mr. Poulson give any particulars?"

"He mentions that it is in connection with a former client of ours, Sir Arthur Deverell: that is all."

"Exactly. We may as well come to the point at once: I am Lady Deverell's brother."

The lawyer, although he was accustomed to startling revelations, looked up in some surprise.

"Her brother! I never knew she had a brother."

"Very likely not, sir; but it's true for all that. The fact is," he continued, "I've been rather a bad lot. I went away from home when Katie was such a little thing that I suppose she has almost forgot my existence. I was always given to a roving life, and was a sad trouble to poor old dad. Until the last year or two I've had a hard time of it, knocking about in

the colony, first turning my hand to one thing, then another, and never sticking to the same thing long enough to get on at it."

"But I suppose you were in communication with your father?"

"Well, that's just where it is, sir. I did write to him once or twice after I got to the colony, but I could see by his answers that my bad luck cut him up. So I made up my mind that not a word more would I write till things turned up trumps; and the old man never had a line from me for years. It was a foolish resolve of mine, for long before things began to mend I read in an English paper that the poor old man was shot in a poaching-affair; and if ever anybody repented their evil ways, I did when I got that news."

"It was unfortunate," said Mr. Poole, appearing not to notice the emotion of the hardy colonist.

"It was worse, sir, it was wicked. Little do young men when they get away into outlandish places think of the days and weeks of anxiety that their friends go through at home, and all along of their silence. I hear from Mr. Poulson, who used to see him now and again, that father looked upon me as dead. He never believed I shouldn't write if I'd been alive. I reckon he never spoke of it to Katie, so it's likely enough she thought me dead too."

"I think she must have done so, for I never heard her mention you, as she probably would have done in her extremity had she thought you were alive."

"It's true, then, what Mr. Poulson said, that they've been in great extremities?"

"The greatest, I imagine; but it is difficult to know exactly how they are situated. Sir Arthur took a strange course when his troubles came upon him. He seemed to be disgusted with all the world,—even with his best friends, and would hold no communication with them. Even I have lost

sight of them now for some time; ever since the affairs were wound up, in fact."

"Then you don't know where they are?" said Price, with a look of alarm. "Dash it all! this was what I particularly wanted to know."

"There are means of finding them, no doubt. We will see."

The lawyer put his lips to the mouth-piece of a gutta-percha tube by the side of the table. "Send Holmes here," he said.

Almost immediately after, Holmes, a senior clerk, made his appearance.

"Holmes, what was the last address of Sir Arthur Deverell?" the lawyer asked.

"I'll see, sir."

The clerk returned to the outer office, closing the door after him.

"Let me understand," said the lawyer. "Lady Deverell was the daughter of James Price the gamekeeper."

"Exactly so, sir."

"And your own sister?"

"Yes, sir."

"And when did you become acquainted with the fact of her having married Sir Arthur, or Mr. Deverell as he then was?"

"I happened to hear that from a pal of mine who came from the same part. He told me as how the old Lady Deverell had taken Katie to live with her when poor father was shot. I thought to myself, she won't care to know anything about the likes of me, and so I put off writing again. Besides, my slice of luck hadn't come then. It all came with a rush."

The clerk came back. "15, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, was the last address, sir," he said; "but I believe they have left there now."

"That will do, Holmes," said the lawyer, as he scribbled the address. "I need hardly say to you," he continued, when

the clerk had left the room, "that I give you the address in confidence. I have no doubt you will gain some intelligence of them there. We were requested not to reveal their whereabouts. I should not have done so except to a relative. Is this all I can do for you?" he added, with the tone of a man overwhelmed with work and anxious to get through it with as little delay as possible.

"No, sir: there's another matter I wish to consult you about, if you can give me the time."

The lawyer looked at his watch. "I have an important engagement at eleven. I can give you ten minutes longer."

"Thank you, sir; we'll come to the point at once. I told you my luck came with a rush. The fact is, for the last two years everything I've touched has turned up trumps. I was the man that found the big nugget everybody was talking about two years ago. I put the money that brought me, into land and into copper-mines. I sold the land at an enormous profit for building-purposes. The mine-shares went up in such an extraordinary way that it almost turned my brain, after all the bad luck I'd had before. Well, sir, to make a long story short, though I ain't a man to boast, if I was to turn over all I possess at this moment it wouldn't be far short of a matter of five-and-thirty thousand pounds."

Price wiped his forehead as if the bare remembrance of his good luck was almost too much for him.

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said the lawyer.

"Thank you, sir. Now, not to lose time, I'll tell you what I want you to do. I don't want money myself, and I ain't a going to stay long in England. I only came home for a bit of a spree, and to see how matters was going on at the old place. I'm off south again; for there's plenty of work in me yet, and a busy life suits me best. Besides, sir, I've matters in hand out there which I must look after myself. It's about as certain as anything well can be in this world that I shall

double my capital in the course of two years more, for when you once get a fair start and have your wits about you, there's no saying what a man can't do in Australia, especially with my experience. Now, there's a little matter of five thousand pounds of mine laying at the Oriental Bank. I ain't got any present use for it, and if I had it wouldn't matter. I want you to get that settled on my sister fast and sure, and as soon as I get back to the colony I'll double, or, for the matter of that, treble it. It must be done so that Sir Arthur can't interfere in any way. If he's as proud as you say, he may make some objection: so it must be done at once, if you please, sir, and without saying a word to anybody. You can manage this for me, sir?"

Even the matter-of-fact lawyer was moved by the open-hearted liberality of the man before him.

"This is really a very generous action, Mr. Price," he began.

"Drop all that, if you please, sir, and get on with the matter as soon as possible. In the mean time I'll call at this address, and see if I can find out where they are. I don't want to see them, though, till this matter is settled. When shall I see you again?"

"We will have the papers drawn at once, and if you will call here, say to-morrow afternoon, I have no doubt the affair can be arranged."

"Thank you, sir. And now, then, the address?"

Mr. Poole handed the slip of paper to his client. "A cab will cost you a shilling, or you can walk it in a quarter of an hour."

"Thank you, sir. I'll charter a cab, not knowing much about your London streets. I think your clerk said he didn't think they were there now. I should like to be sure of that before I go."

The lawyer again summoned Holmes, who entered this time with a letter in his hand.



"You said you thought Sir Arthur had left Charlotte Street, Holmes?"

"I know he has, sir; I've just found a letter from Lady Deverell, mentioning that they were leaving the next day, but giving no address."

"That's unfortunate," the lawyer remarked, turning to Price. "The only thing I can suggest under the circumstances, if you really find them gone, is to endeavor to find their whereabouts from the landlady."

"By the way," he added, suddenly, "I was almost forgetting they were known there only as Mr. and Mrs. Morley. You must inquire for them in that name."

"Exactly so," responded Price. "Well, then, sir, to-morrow afternoon I'll be here again. What time shall we say?"

"Three o'clock will suit me best."

"Then at three I'm your man; and be sure you bind it down tight, sir."

"Trust me for that," responded the lawyer, with a smile. "By the way, you had better let me know where you are to be found in town, in case we wish to communicate with you."

"Reed's Boarding House, 15, America Square, Minories, is where I'm hanging out at present."

"Just so," answered the lawyer, writing it down; "and now I fear my time is up. Good-morning."

He held out his hand in quite a friendly manner. Price shook it warmly, feeling greatly relieved by his interview, said good-morning to the lawyer, and, jumping into the first hansom he met, drove straight to Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## NEW HOPES.

"SAVED for the present," said Mr. Hume, entering the room where Lady Deverell was preparing the breakfast the next morning. "The future will depend on you ; and, considering what you have already done for him, there is not much to fear if you are only allowed to have your own way."

"You think he is progressing favorably?" she exclaimed, eagerly.

"I think, with ordinary care, his recovery is assured. I wonder how many men have been allowed to die for want of a little timely surgical aid? Another half-hour would have seen the end of him last night."

"You have been my guardian angel again : how can I ever thank you sufficiently?"

"Don't say too much, or I shall grow conceited. If there is ever a time when a man may be pardoned for being so, it is when his skill has snatched another from the jaws of death. It does, indeed, make me feel proud of my calling. To a man of any feeling in the profession, no reward can be so great as the thought of the happiness he can confer on others by the exercise of his professional knowledge. It is worth all the fees in the world."

The surgeon hastily swallowed his breakfast, sending Lady Deverell off in the mean time to stay with the patient. Having finished his meal, he sent a message up to say he wished to speak with her. "In the midst of all this anxiety," he said, as she entered the room, "we have had no time to refer

to the startling news I told you I had to communicate. I would not mention it last night, for I knew you wanted rest, and the excitement would have prevented your getting any. I hope you had some sleep?"

"Indeed I had. When I saw my dear husband sleeping so calmly, I went to the sofa with a quiet mind, and slept soundly for four hours. I have not done such a thing for a week."

"That's well! and now to business, for I must start by the next train. You were, doubtless, surprised at my addressing you as Lady Deverell: this is how it came about. I had only just finished writing the first part of my letter to you, when the servant entered the room to say that a person wished to see me. Concluding that it was a patient, and having a few minutes to spare, I requested that he might be shown into the consulting-room, and on going down I found a person of a somewhat foreign appearance waiting to see me. He begged pardon for troubling me, and said he had just come from your old lodgings in Charlotte Street, having been sent there by Messrs. Dawson and Poole, of Lincoln's Inn, for the purpose of ascertaining your address. He had seen your old favorite, Susan, who had informed him that you had left no address, and that she had no notion of your whereabouts. Please don't interrupt me, but wait for the end. The stranger, it seemed, was sadly disappointed, and entreated Susan to endeavor to find out your address, as he said it was a matter of the greatest moment to you."

"Oh, Mr. Hume! what can it be? Surely no new trouble?"

Trouble had been her portion so long, that she had almost ceased to believe in any fortunate accident. Mr. Hume, however, hurried on.

"I have told you already it is good news, but please let me tell it in my own way, or you won't half appreciate it. At

the last moment, it seems,—in fact, after the stranger had gone away,—Susan thought of me, and hurried after the mysterious stranger to suggest an application to me. He caught at the idea, and came on to me at once, fortunately just in time to catch me. Now prepare yourself for a most startling surprise. Who do you think it was?"

"I have not the remotest notion," Lady Deverell answered, looking at him in amazement.

"No less a person than your brother, James Price!"

"My brother!" exclaimed Lady Deverell, incredulously.

"Why, he has been dead for years."

"I assure you, you are mistaken: he is alive and perfectly well. Not only well, but prosperous. He has made a large fortune in Australia."

"Is it possible?" she exclaimed, in utter amazement.

"But why did he not write?" she continued. "We have never heard from him since I was a child."

"I can't give you his motive: we had no time to go into it. I made him come with me in the brougham as far as my patient's house, and gave him as many particulars concerning you as I was acquainted with. Of course, before I felt at liberty to answer any inquiries, I was obliged to assure myself that he was no impostor. He brought a letter to town from a certain Mr. Poulson, a banker at Sandport, and had your Charlotte Street address written on a piece of Messrs. Dawson and Poole's paper. There was little need for this, however, as I never saw honesty more plainly written on any man's face in my life. We got into a terrible fog, until he made me understand who you were: after that it was plain sailing enough."

"This is indeed marvelous, Mr. Hume: I cannot realize it. Oh, my dear father! how happy this would have made him had he lived! But is he not coming to me?"

"Of course; he would have come with me, but he had some

important business in town which obliged him to stay there to-day. He will be here this evening."

"My dear, dear Jim! How glad I shall be to see him again! I was only a very little thing when he went away, but I have a distinct recollection of him."

"Not the least satisfactory part of the business to me is that he is evidently a man of very considerable wealth, and fully intends that you shall have no further difficulty with regard to money. Indeed, he intimated as much."

Lady Deverell smiled sadly. "The difficulty is there," she said, pointing to the room above. "My husband would never consent to live on charity."

"Pack of stuff," Mr. Hume exclaimed, for once losing his patience. "Pardon me, Lady Deverell, but your husband *must* consent to accept some help under present circumstances. It is unfair to all his friends. It is more than unfair to you: it is positive cruelty; and so I shall tell him if he should be obdurate. By the way, I should recommend you not to tell your husband about your brother for a day or two. Any excitement—especially such an excitement as this—may be highly injurious. You might take the landlady into your confidence, and meet your brother quietly."

"I will do so, of course, if you think it better."

"I do. Well, now, I must be off, or I shall miss my train. Recollect, perfect quiet and good nursing. If you can get your brother to take him to Madeira, so much the better. If possible, I will come down again, but I hope it will not be necessary. Of course, it will be many months, under the most favorable circumstances, before he will be quite strong. A sea-voyage would be the making of him. Good-by."

He held out his hand, but Lady Deverell hesitated a moment before giving her own.

"Mr. Hume," she said, a little nervously, "you told me, with your usual kindness, that you came to me as a friend."

“You know how sincerely I thank you ; but I cannot allow you to be at the expense of the journey. You must let me give you that.”

She held out a sum of money wrapped in paper. Mr. Hume took it quietly aside.

“Not one farthing, my dear lady. It would spoil the pleasure of my visit. By and by,” he added, smiling, “when you are here again, I will take a big fee: this time those grateful eyes shall be a reward I would not exchange for a bag of gold. Now let me have one more look at the patient, and then for the train.”

In half an hour he was gone, leaving so happy a heart behind that Lady Deverell thought him only a little lower than the angels. Heaven itself seemed to open to her, with the double happiness of the thought of her husband's recovery and her brother's return. She was not, after all, left to fight the battle alone, now that her playmate of former years had returned ; for Jim had always been fond of his little sister, and she still remembered how good he had been to her in the old days at the cottage.

---

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### JIM.

IN spite of the happiness which circled round her heart, the hours seemed to drag on but slowly with Lady Deverell after Mr. Hume's departure. Quite a new sensation was awakened in her breast. That terrible feeling of isolation arising from her husband's constant illness and the absence of their friends—the feeling of being thrown so completely

on her own limited resources—was now at an end. Her brother was coming to her—some one belonging to herself to share her sorrows and anxieties, and (she hoped) to be by her side with ready help in time of need; some one whom she could at least turn for sympathy and support in future.

How eagerly she counted the hours as they passed! She had taken Mr. Hume's advice with regard to the landlady, and the kind-hearted woman at once volunteered to remain in Sir Arthur's room during the brother's visit. There was, however, very little necessity for this. Now that the cure was over, Sir Arthur slept almost continuously. It was the best thing to bring back health and strength, and the wife rejoiced accordingly.

Long before her brother could possibly arrive she took her station at the window to watch for his approach, although she well knew she should not recognize him when he came in sight. She was picturing to herself the dim, dream-like remembrance she had of him as a boy, and half expected to see him appear with the same round, rosy face, little realizing how time and change had obliterated every trace of resemblance.

The lamps were lit on the esplanade before the house, and darkness had quite settled over the sea, before he arrived. She was still watching from the window when a cab drove up at the garden gate, and Jim, brown and weather-beaten as he had already seen him, stepped out. Lady Deferell's heart gave a great bound. She could hardly speak for emotion as she moved towards the door to anticipate the servant. The next moment the door was open, and her arms were wrapped round her brother's neck.

Then it all broke forth. The long-pent-up sorrow, the anxieties she had endured alone, the isolation, the night and days of watching, the weary struggle with poverty

wretchedness, and the joy at her brother's return,—it all came forth in the sobs that, in spite of herself, would break forth from her overladen breast, and which made the landlady hurry them into the sitting-room and close the door, lest the sound should reach the ears of the sick man. Then Jim took her in his strong arms, holding her tightly to his breast for shelter and for comfort, and pressed his own rough face and bearded chin against the delicate, beautiful face upturned to his own.

And Nature did not say, "This is not your brother, but only an imaginary one :—" so "Nature's promptings" were for once at fault.

But at length the sobs grew calmer, and her joy broke forth into words, though they came amidst her tears.

"Oh, Jim, Jim ! I am so glad you are come."

"And I am well pleased to see you again, Katie. I've often thought of your dear little face as it was when I left the cottage. What a pretty little face it was ! I shouldn't have known you in the least."

She smiled even through her tears. "You mean to say I have grown ugly now," she said, with a look which had in it something of the archness of former days. "You will have to love me for all that."

"No, I don't mean that," said Jim, a little abashed. "It is as pretty as ever it was, but different. But I'm so glad to hear your husband is better. I saw Mr. Hume at the station just as he arrived, and he gave me quite a hopeful account of him."

"Oh, yes ; he has taken a load off my mind, and now your coming makes me quite joyful. But oh, Jim, why did you never write ? It would have made our dear father so happy to have heard from you."

"Don't talk about it, Katie. I've repented it over and over again, I promise you. The truth is, I was so infernally unlucky for the first ten years or so, that I should only have



made you all miserable; and then—but there, it's no good going into that now; it's all past and gone."

"But you have been fortunate since?"

"Beyond everything I could have imagined."

"I'm so glad; for now you will stop with us, won't you?"

Jim didn't like to distress her by talking of his intention of going south soon; so he only said, "Well, I must go back some time or other, for I have a lot of things in hand out there that require looking into. I'm a rich man now, Katie, but I expect to be three times as rich in the course of a few years; and, by the way, there's a little matter of five thousand pounds made over to you for your sole use and benefit. I thought it better to get this done at once, just by way of a beginning, and in case anything happened to me."

She rose up and looked at him half reproachfully.

"Oh, Jim! surely you have not done that?"

"Indeed, though, I have. Why, what is it to me? I can back it with six times the amount, if I choose. You don't suppose I am going to let you grind on through all these troubles without giving a helping hand, do you?"

"But such a sum!"

"I tell you it's nothing to me. Why, I've been accustomed to see fellows throwing money about like dirt. At one time we were inventing ways of getting rid of it; and one fellow put a fiver between two pieces of bread-and-butter and ate it as a sandwich."

The thought of her husband came into her head.

"I fear Arthur will never consent to take it," she said.

"I've put it beyond his power to refuse. Besides, it's nothing to him. If your brother chooses to make over a certain sum to you, I don't see how he is to interfere. He surely wouldn't be fool enough to prevent your using it. Besides, it isn't as if it came from a stranger."

"That certainly may make a difference. Oh, it is so good

of you, Jim!" she continued, again clasping him around the neck and kissing him. "But, dear me, you are having nothing to eat all this time! you must be starving."

She rang the bell to order in the humble steak which she had ordered for her brother. "I am sorry to say I have no wine to offer you, Jim. Will you have some tea or some ale?"

"Oh, we'll soon set that matter right," said Jim, going to the passage, and dragging in a huge hamper, which had come with his luggage. "I mean to crack a bottle of champagne over this meeting, Katie; and I have brought down a few little things which I thought might be useful to you."

All her troubles seemed gliding away before the advent of this good brother. Her heart was filled to the brim with thankfulness, and the evening glided away in quiet talk of the future, and reminiscences of the dim past, which led them almost unconsciously into the small hours of the morning. One or two visits to her husband in the intervals of his refreshing sleep quite reassured her as to his progress; and altogether she felt that never in her brightest days had she known so genuine a happiness as she felt to-night. But when Jim had departed to the lodgings near at hand, which the landlady had provided for him, and Katie was again left alone, she fell on her knees before the chair where he had been sitting, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed forth, as if from her inmost heart, these words: "If he had only come before! Oh, God! if he had only come before!"

Nevertheless, she thanked God with all her heart and soul for the happiness she knew that night, believing that even her sorest trial was for her good, although she saw through a glass darkly.

Jim was a wonderful fellow when he took things in hand. His energy was unbounded, and his powers of persuasion beyond description. He had heard from Mr. Hume of the extreme desirability of a trip to Madeira for the invalid, and

he was determined to carry it out. Sir Arthur, when he was informed of the project, submitted with a far better grace than they had anticipated. He seemed always anxious to have rough, unpolished, but thoroughly genuine Jim by his side, and struck up the greatest possible friendship with him.

Three weeks after the date of Jim's arrival, the steamship *Hydaspes*, twenty-five hundred tons register, steamed out of Southampton Water, bound for Madeira and the Cape; and sitting well muffled up in comfortable wraps and furs under the lee of the weather bulwarks, were Sir Arthur Deverell and his wife. The happy smile on the face of both seemed to rival the bright sunshine overhead; though their joy was somewhat dimmed by the thought that kind-hearted Jim, who was busy in London arranging his affairs, would long ere their return have set sail once more for Australia.

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### GODIVA.

"PICTURES and china. They're the things you ought to go in for now. Pictures and china, by George!"

"Unfortunately, I don't understand the first, and don't care a rap about the last."

"What's that to do with it? There's no need for you to understand. Go to Gamble for the pictures, and to old Solomon for the china, and you're safe with regard to quality. They'll make you pay through the nose, but that don't matter to you. As to quantity, you know what you feel inclined to spend."

Mr. Bulfinch and a new acquaintance named Gregory were in the lobby of the Parthenon Club. Since we last saw him,

Bulfinch had prospered beyond all conception. Everything he touched turned to gold. He was the possessor of Norton Towers; he was the Croesus whose name was in everybody's mouth. The world bowed down to him as to a golden image. Gregory, to whom the coverts at Norton had become a necessity of existence, had introduced him at the club; and Gregory was, moreover, the only man in the world to whom Bulfinch had shown himself in his natural colors and revealed all his deficiencies. Pomposity and braggadocio he exhibited to every single soul beside. Gregory had in some way got behind the scenes; or perhaps Bulfinch had become aware of the necessity of some one friend in the new world of fashion to which he aspired, to whom he could appeal in any social difficulty,—to whom he could be his natural self,—and who, by virtue of heavy bribes, would gloss over his weak points and keep him straight in his intercourse with those around.

In proportion to his pomposity with others was his meekness with Gregory. It showed how small the man really was. He himself knew that Gregory led him by the nose, and, although the thought galled him to the last degree, he had no power to resist it. Having shown himself as he really was, he must submit in this instance to play second fiddle,—though he did it with a very bad grace.

Gregory, however, was not the man to take a mean advantage of his position. Norton Towers was an open house to him. He knew the contents of the cellar better than Bulfinch himself. He rode to hounds on the best horses, had the pick of the partridge-shooting, and the warmest corners when the pheasants were dropping like hail. Not possessing an ambition beyond port wine and pheasants, though in his passage through life he had picked up a smattering of other matters, he was content.

They lounged down the steps of the club. Auberon Leslie was just coming up. They stopped to say good-day.

"I was telling Bulfinch he must go in for pictures and

china," said Gregory. "You're just the man we want. Put him in the way of something good, Leslie."

Leslie was really a man of taste. More than this, he was a man of feeling. Though not an artist, he had the true artist instinct. People who liked to be thought clever called his temperament æsthetical, without exactly knowing what the word meant.

His sensitive nature shrank at this direct appeal of Gregory's. With him art was not a trade, it was religion. He venerated a fine picture as he venerated the Bible, or Shakespeare, or Milton,—outpourings all of divine creative impulses.

"Do you mean that Mr. Bulfinch wants to buy pictures at so much a yard, or wants something really good?" he asked.

"Something really good," answered Bulfinch, instinctively feeling it was the right thing to say.

"Then it just fortunately happens that I have now come from an artist who has a picture almost completed, finer than anything I have seen for an age. If you like, I'll take you to see it. You'll be a lucky man if you secure it. If I had been rich you should never have had the chance."

Bulfinch's brougham was close at hand. It was a part of his policy always to have a trap of some sort close at hand for the accommodation of his friends. His friends found, almost unconsciously, that Bulfinch saved them trouble in many little ways. It was one of his aids to popularity. He was such a convenient man to know.

Leslie instructed the coachman, and they drove to 15, Charlotte Street.

"Where are we?" asked Bulfinch, as he observed the number on the door.

"In Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square," answered Leslie.

Bulfinch looked surprised, and seemed trying to recall something. "Odd," he said, at length. "I knew some people that were here some little time ago."

"Not the artist we're going to see, I suppose?" said Leslie.

"What's his name?"

"Herbert."

"No. That was not the name."

They entered the house so well known to the reader. The presiding spirit of the place, Susan, was no longer there, and "Buttons" reigned with undivided sway. His costume was more buttony than ever; his strut was more consequential; his vanity exuded more abundantly from his expanding form. His bulk, in fact, was so excessive that his jackets appeared to hold him in and confine him within an unnatural compass, like the iron bands round compressed hay.

The artist was alone in his studio, intent upon the work which had absorbed all his time and thoughts for many months. A shade of discontent was still upon his face, as he felt the hopelessness of realizing perfectly the image which existed in his mind, although through long laborious days, and many nights as well, the concentrated work of mind and hand had been brought to bear upon his subject.

How little even the most thoughtful among us reflect, as they pass through the crowded galleries of our annual exhibitions, on the long days of labor expended on the works which are spread in such profusion around! A picture which a flip-pant critic passes by with a sneer, because it may not happen to coincide with his peculiar (and usually narrow) view of art, may represent an amount of mental labor—ay, and physical endurance as well—which, applied in another channel, might subvert an empire, or change the destinies of the human race. How little do those who sneer reflect on the bitterness of disappointed hopes which their condemnation involves! on the wear and tear of heart and soul thus unrequited! on the strong endeavor, thus baffled, to convey a new delight or a wholesome lesson to mankind!

A fear of some such result might have filled the artist's mind

as he gazed on his work. He had gone through all the agonies of an early artistic career in the overcrowded world of art,—had known the enduring depression of poverty, the bitter disappointments that spring from the caprice of “hanging-committees,” the half-hearted praise even of his own friends, in so many cases the last to discern merit. He was beginning now to surge upwards to the surface, and to encounter those storms of criticism which buffet us so unrelentingly as soon as we forsake the placid depths beneath to seek for fortune on the surface-tide.

This year he was making a high bid for fame. He had encountered Auberon Leslie, who had at once discerned the exceeding merit of the work upon which the artist was engaged, and had advised a protective price until the verdict of the public was known. Comparatively few had been admitted to the studio during the progress of the picture, though already it had begun to be noised about that a work of more than ordinary merit would in all probability grace the walls of the next Academy Exhibition.

It was a picture of Lady Godiva,—she who in Coventry of old “built herself an everlasting name” by a sacrifice unparalleled in the annals of womankind. The picture in no respect resembled the commonplace representations of the wife of Leofric, which usually depict her sitting complacently on a horse with a countenance as unmoved as if she were about to take her daily amble in the suburbs of the ancient city. The painter had selected the moment when, in the words of our great living poet, she

“Unclad herself in haste, adown the stair  
Stole on, and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid  
From pillar unto pillar until she reached  
The gateway.”

She was represented standing tremulously on the last steps of the antique porch as she cast aside the drapery which had

screened her lovely form in her progress to the doorway. Traces of the struggle her mind had undergone before she resolved on this sacrifice were visible in the pale cheek, the sunken eye, and the tightly-drawn lips. But a sublime pity, dominant over the anguish of shame, pervaded the face, which, in the intensity of its suffering, was sufficient to draw tears from all but the most callous observers.

It was a noble conception of the subject,—one that told as plainly as words themselves all the suffering, all the struggle, and all the fixed resolve of that feeling, fearless heart, which would doubtless have faced death itself, if in so doing it could have relieved the famine-stricken forms which thronged the castle gates in the vain hope of moving the heart of the grim earl.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### BULFINCH TRIUMPHANT.

AT the sound of approaching footsteps the artist drew a light curtain in front of his picture. His sensitive nature shrank from the criticisms which he knew his work would elicit from the shallow crowd. Only the most refined natures would appreciate its higher qualities, he thought; and the time had not yet come when he must submit to the process of vivisection at the hands of the heroes of the pen, who for the most part save their reputation for taste and discrimination by meting out their measure of admiration in proportion to the painter's fame.

"Mr. Bulfinch is in search of something really good in the way of art, Herbert," said Auberon Leslie, introducing his



two companions to the painter. "Will you allow him to see your 'Godiva'?" As he spoke, a cold feeling crossed his mind that, after all, he had made a mistake in bringing hither two such men as Gregory and Bulfinch. He knew that the former, at least, valued his opinion, but he doubted if either would enter into his own feeling with regard to the work they had come to see; and, moreover, it seemed almost like desecration to let it pass into the hands of a man who would value it only from the recommendation of another and from the amount he had paid for the work. "After all, though," he reflected, "Herbert is a needy man, and if he can secure a good round sum from the renowned millionaire, that fact alone will do much to extend his fame, and cause the impressionable public to gather round the picture with minds strongly predisposed in its favor.

"I shall be charmed to show it to any friend of yours, Leslie," the artist replied, as he proceeded to draw back the curtain in front of his picture. "It is a work which may be considered somewhat startling by fastidious people, gentlemen," he added. "Even the directors of some of our galleries ignore the nude, in these days of sham propriety, and hide it away in dark corners. Madame Elise is more to their fancy than Phidias. A student of sixteen is set to work at the nude, exclusively; but in after-life he is not considered discreet unless he clothe his models in diaphanous draperies."

Bulfinch seized his opportunity. "I have no such non-sensical scruples, at any rate," he said. "By Jove!"

The last words were elicited by the sudden sight of the uncovered picture. Contrary to Leslie's anticipations, even the cold, worldly heart of the lawyer was moved by the marvelous beauty of the figure the artist had portrayed. Not only were the expressions, drawing, and colors perfect, but the flesh was painted with such wondrous fidelity that it had all the roundness and vitality of life itself.

They stood gazing at it in silent admiration for some minutes. The artist felt that it was the highest tribute they could pay to his work. He had hardly anticipated such an effect on natures less elevated than his friend Leslie's, but in truth the face was one that hushed and awed the most worldly heart into silent pity and reverence for so great a sacrifice.

"Is it possible you have not sold that picture, Mr. Herbert?" Bulfinch at length exclaimed.

"I have made no attempt to do so. You are among the first who have seen it. Indeed, my kind friend here has persuaded me to put a price on it which I fancy few would care to give."

"I will give you anything you like to ask for it," answered Bulfinch, impetuously.

With the wayward impulse of his artist nature, Herbert's soul, in spite of himself, rose up in rebellion at these words. For months had he been working at the picture before him, with the strong hope that it would bring him fame and fortune at last. He had not been altogether unsuccessful in his profession hitherto, but the quiet earnestness with which he had pursued his calling had prevented his taking the high position in public estimation which many men of his own age but of far less solid acquirements had long since attained. The prize was now within his grasp, but he had brought to bear upon this his latest work so entire a devotion—it had become so completely a part of himself—that his mind revolted against exchanging it for mere gold. It was like bargaining for his own soul.

He was so long in answering that the lawyer spoke again.

"What price do you put upon it?" he asked.

Herbert named a sum which would have made Sir Joshua's hair stand on end, or Vandyke turn in his grave. But in these days a few feet of canvas can command a price which

would purchase a landed estate. When a Meissonier is valued at twenty guineas the square inch, it is indeed a millennium for art!

"May I consider the picture mine at that price?" Bulfinch continued.

The artist still hesitated on the word "Yes," but he said it.

Leslie turned to Bulfinch, and actually shook hands with him.

"I congratulate you with all my heart, Mr. Bulfinch. You have shown great discrimination in your unhesitating purchase of that picture."

"Yes, Bulfinch," chimed in Gregory. "'Pon my soul I congratulate you. You'll be the envy of all London. Get a bit of china to equal it, and you may retire on your laurels for a few months at least."

"You will, of course, allow me to retain the privilege of exhibiting it?" Herbert said.

There was little need for this request. The first feeling of genuine admiration called forth by the beauty of the work had somewhat subsided. It was succeeded by a grosser fancy in the lawyer's heart. This would be a new feather in his cap. He would be regarded with envy by the world of connoisseurs. He would be looked upon as a man of taste. The picture would be so much talked about, that, as the owner, his name would be in everybody's mouth. Let him exhibit it, indeed! He would have added another cipher to the forthcoming check rather than forego this new stepping-stone to fame.

Auberon Leslie was gazing musingly at the picture.

"You have hit the very point I have always found wanting in all other illustrations of the subject," he said. "Over and over again painters have given us the exquisite form, the beautiful face, the luxuriant tresses; but the soul of the woman,—never! To a nature so sensitive as hers must have

been, who could make such a sacrifice to rescue the down-trodden people from despair,—possibly from death,—the sacrifice must have been worse than death itself. In that worn, tear-stained face I read all that she must have suffered. In the startled attitude I read the terror of her soul, even while she fulfilled her bitter task; and in the firm chin and rigid lips I read the strength of will which triumphed over self and enabled her to accomplish her fixed resolve. How you could have conceived a face so full of conflicting emotions I cannot imagine, much less how you could have conveyed it to canvas so marvellously."

"Strange to say, it was all in the face of my model," the artist replied, gazing contemplatively at his picture.

"Your model!" exclaimed Bulfinch. "Do you mean to say you had a living model for that picture?"

"Certainly. I should otherwise have found it difficult to conceive such a face or form as that."

"You will excuse my pursuing this subject," Bulfinch continued, "but I have been impressed with the idea ever since I came into the room that I have seen that face somewhere before."

"It is hardly likely. She was in very poor circumstances, with a sick husband lying ill in this very house," the artist continued, dreamily, with his thoughts still intent upon his picture.

A strange expression flashed across the hard face of the painter.

"And her name?" he inquired, in an assumed tone of indifference.

"Morley," the artist responded. Then suddenly he seemed to awake from his trance. "But I must beg of you," he continued, "not to repeat the name. I did not intend to mention it. I am convinced there were some very sad circumstances connected with the lady who sat to me,—for a

lady she evidently was,—which made me resolve never to mention the subject. I encountered her accidentally, <sup>as</sup> struck with her face, and, seeing that she was in miserably reduced circumstances, I made overtures to her through the maid here,—tempted her, in fact, with a sum which, I presume, was a small fortune to one in her position. I can never forget, however, the expression of abject suffering in her face while she sat. You see it there as far as my feeble pencil could portray it. It impressed me so much that I regretted I had ever made the request, and I released her from her task of sitting before I had half completed my work.”

“One would not have imagined it, to judge by the result,” said Leslie.

“Her expression was so impressed on my mind that I could not forget it. Her face haunts me still. I should have caught a more literal likeness if she had sat longer, but that was a secondary matter. I believe she had become a model to support a sick husband; but I had no means of getting at her history, for they left immediately after, and I have never heard of them since. There is a romance about my model, you see, sir, which will interest you as the owner of the picture; and I am sure you will respect my secret.”

“I am more than ever glad that I am the lucky possessor of such a work,” Bulfinch replied, evasively. “I consider the price quite nominal in comparison with my satisfaction at securing so valuable a picture, I can assure you,—so much so, in fact, that I shall be glad if you will paint me a companion-picture when you have time, Mr. Herbert. And now, Gregory, we must say good-morning. A thousand thanks, Mr. Leslie, for bringing us here. May I hope you will come and dine with me—you and Mr. Herbert, if he will do me the honor—and advise me where to hang the picture? It must have the best place in the house. Such a work as that must not be hid under a bushel. Good-morning.”

He backed himself out of the door with quite a beaming face. In all his life Bulfinch had never been so happily triumphant as he was that day.

---

## CHAPTER XXX.

## AT THE CLUB.

LONDON in the height of the season. What a medley those words call up ! What a whirligig of hobby-horses and sham carriages, crowded with the children, and urged by the genius of fashion ! I am not going to moralize on it. I know, if I did, the reader would skip my diatribes ; moreover, it would be utter presumption in me to follow, even at a respectful distance, where so many giants of the pen have gone before. Even their preaching has been of no avail. The whirligig still whirls on, its occupants giddy as ever, and as little conscious of a purpose. Legislators still squabble over questionable political schemes, which, ten to one, another generation will ignore. Religion is still a fashionable pastime, or a hot-bed of fierce polemics. Marriage is still a social Stock Exchange, and each one of the human particles that make up the strange conglomerate known as Society tries to lift his nose an inch or two above his neighbor's, and measures his happiness by his success.

In the very centre of the whirligig, we come upon our old friends Poingdestre and Clement Boyd.

They are seated in the smoking-room of the Parthenon Club, one hot afternoon in June. Two members of the club, unknown to us, are talking to them, and they are discussing the

merits of a picture in the Royal Academy, which has taken London by storm.

"A great work, undoubtedly a great work," observes Val, in the slow, sepulchral voice in which he is wont to deliver his sentences. Nothing ever hurried him in this world yet, not even an express train. Being once told that he would miss the train if he did not make haste, he merely said there was another three hours later, and that would give him time to debate the question whether or not he would have a foot-warmer, foot-warmers being decidedly comfortable, but calculated to make the boots creak, which he detested.

"What do *you* say, Boyd?" he inquired of the R. A.

"The best thing in the exhibition this year. We all think so. In drawing, color, and expression it is quite unrivaled, and Millais himself could hardly excel it in freedom of handling."

"Who's the lucky possessor?"

"Don't you know? Why, Bulfinch, the millionaire."

"What! the man who bought Norton Towers when poor Deverell was sold up?"

"The same."

"A most unmitigated specimen of the genus cad," observes Val, with a deliberate emphasis on each word.

"Take care, Poingdestre," exclaims one of the bystanders. "He's one of our members."

"The devil he is! Who proposed him?"

"I've not an idea. His money gets him in everywhere."

"By Jove," Val remarks, "it would be a fine thing to start a new sect called money-worshippers. What a fine congregation it would draw! I should be a high-priest myself. I believe the apple Eve ate was a golden pippin, so the love for gold came in with our common mother. It must take a lot of gilding to make Bulfinch shine, though," he adds, rising, and lighting a cigar.

The two members saunter away. Boyd stands leaning against the chimney-piece, as Val resumes his seat.

"Wasn't there a suspicion of foul play in the Norton Towers affair?" he asked.

Val sends out a long stream of smoke before he answers.

"More than a suspicion, I should say. I know Deverell's opinion well enough; but there's no proof, and therefore one's mouth must remain shut."

Boyd goes on:

"You've heard the news of Deverell, I suppose?"

"No."

"Not that he's returned?"

"No: I've heard nothing. We've only just returned ourselves."

"Oh, yes; some rich relation of Lady Deverell's turned up. A man who had made a pot of money in Australia. He sent him to Madeira. The climate worked wonders for Deverell, brought him quite round again, in fact. While there, the hancery suit touching Mrs. Montagu Gore's property was decided in their favor. You know she died four years ago, leaving everything to Deverell, and the will was disputed by some distant relatives."

"I know; but it was not much, was it?"

"Enough to keep them comfortably."

"I'm awfully glad to hear it. Where are they to be found?"

"They've taken up their quarters at Chiswick for the present. You should look them up."

Boyd turned to the table where the newspapers were arranged, and, selecting the *Times*, seated himself in an easy-chair and commenced reading.

Poingdestre followed his example, and settled himself down to read the *Globe*. As he did so, the door opened, and Deverell entered the room.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## THE PICTURE OF THE YEAR.

ON seeing Poingdestre, Sir Arthur paused a moment in the doorway, while a pleasant smile spread itself over his face. The change in him was quite remarkable. The pale cheeks had assumed a warm healthy brown, the lines of care and sickness were gone, and he looked ten years younger than when at Ventnor.

He had seen Boyd before, so he passed on at once to Poingdestre, who was intent upon the paper, and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Val!"

Poingdestre turned with a look of delight at the familiar voice, and grasped Deverell's hand.

"Arthur, old man, I'm awfully glad to see you!"

"I knew you would be. You can't be more glad than I am to see you, and to get back to civilized life."

"I've only just heard you were back. How is your wife?"

"Quite well, and as happy as possible now I'm all right again."

"You had a narrow shave."

"Yes: it was a toss-up whether or not I should pull through."

There was a pause of a few minutes. Each had a dozen things to talk about; but it is invariably the case that when old friends meet after a long absence there is a period of stilted conversation before the right vein is hit upon. Each has encountered so many new experiences of no interest to

the other, that it requires time to settle down into the right groove.

"So I hear you've won the heiress at last," said Deverell. "How did you overcome her scruples?"

"By adopting my usual course,—going straight. She thought every one courted her for her money,—very naturally. I thought it better to tell her I did, for one."

"And she liked your candor?"

"So it seemed. Then I asked her if there was a chance of her ever becoming fond of me, and she said, 'Possibly.' At Rome I asked her point-blank if she would fix Lady-day for the wedding, and she said 'Possibly' again; so I took her at her word. When the day came, and the parson asked her if she would take this man, meaning me, for her wedded band, she answered 'Possibly' a third time, but corrected herself, and with some difficulty got out 'I will.'"

Sir Arthur broke into a laugh at this quaint description of his friend's courtship. "Well, you are both to be congratulated," he said. "You have a wife with unlimited coin, which is what you always went in for, while she has a husband with as little nonsense about him as any man I know."

Val's countenance did not often betray his thoughts, but he was evidently gratified at Deverell's opinion.

"Thanks," he said. "I am not given to say much about my own feelings as a rule, but I don't mind telling you that before my marriage I liked my wife's money better than herself, now I admit that I like my wife better than her money. I wish, though, she had consented last year," he added.

"For any particular reason?"

"Yes. That fellow Bulfinch never should have had Norton Towers. I'd have bought it myself, and so saved it from sacrilege."

A shade passed over Deverell's face. Even coming from Poingdestre, the suggestion touched his pride.

"Thanks," he said, curtly : " I appreciate your kind intentions."

He took up a paper, as if to end the subject. Val was too far-sighted not to take the hint, and said no more. Deverell suddenly turned round.

" I hear that fellow Bulfinch has become a member of this club," he said.

" Yes," replied Val ; " but if I had been at home there should have been one black ball in the box, at all events. I don't hate, as a rule, it's too much trouble, but it becomes a decided pleasure to hate that fellow Bulfinch. I must be off," he said, rising ; " I have to see Jones about a horse. I shall be back presently. By the way, where are you located ?"

" At Chiswick. We have a pretty little villa there. You must come and see us ; it's a pleasant ride."

" Well, we'll arrange it when I come back ; I sha'n't be ten minutes," replied Val, sauntering at his usual easy pace towards the door.

Sir Arthur turned to speak to Boyd, but found he was engaged in an animated conversation with some friends at the far end of the room. Placing his hat and riding-cane on the table, therefore, he sat down to read the papers.

While thus engaged, there was a sound of loud talking at the door, and no less a person than Bulfinch himself entered the room. He was followed by two acquaintances,—Jerningham, an offshoot of the " upper ten" with limited means, who had taken to Bulfinch for the sake of his dinners and his wines, and Gregory, who, as we know, had an eye to the coverts at Norton.

Deverell recognized the lawyer's voice at once. He had, however, no desire to exchange a syllable with him. Their parting had not been an agreeable one, and a renewal of their intercourse was not a thing to be desired by either.

Bulfinch sank into the first easy-chair, and, flourishing his handkerchief, ran on in his old obtrusive style.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "I consider myself lucky to get it. The finest picture on the walls,—universally admitted to be so. A long price; but what of that, if it gives so much pleasure? A thing of beauty,' you know, my dear Jerningham, is, undoubtedly, 'a joy forever,' as Shakspeare says."

"Keats, I think," remarked Boyd, from behind, who had overheard the lawyer's remark.

Bulfinch turned suddenly, with a look expressive of some surprise that any one should presume to correct him. Boyd was, however, too good an authority for him to venture on a denial, so he returned to his oily manner.

"Ah! thank you, Mr. Boyd. Keats, is it? Quite the same thing. The moment I saw that picture," he resumed, "I said to myself, 'Bulfinch, my boy, that's the thing for you; that's quite in your line.' Know nothing of art, but now what pleases me; and that pleased me infernally. Keats, therefore, was no object."

"Who's the painter?" asked Jerningham, with a yawn.

"Don't you know?" replied Bulfinch, with a little contemptuous smile. "Why, Herbert: a rising man, a very young man."

Deverell lowered his paper an inch or two at the mention of the name, and glanced over at Bulfinch. The spectacle was not agreeable, however, and he resumed his reading. Jerningham struck in next.

"Comparatively unknown before, I think."

"Quite so; quite so. Lived in the forsaken district of Bedford Square. By the way, there's a romantic story connected with that picture,—a very romantic story."

Mr. Bulfinch stretched himself out easily in his chair with the air of a man who had an interesting fact to reveal which he knew would command attention. Boyd had sauntered

over from the table where he had been reading, and, with one or two other members, gathered round the millionaire.

"What is it?" inquired Jerningham.

"Perhaps, though," pursued Bulfinch, "it would be as well to ask you not to let the story go any further. I don't care to have it repeated."

As he made the request he glanced quickly in the direction of Deverell, who appeared absorbed in his paper.

"Oh, certainly!" was the response of the bystanders, although each one inwardly resolved, if the story were a good one, to take the first opportunity of retailing it, coupled with a similar proviso.

"Well, you know," Bulfinch continued, "for a picture of this kind an unexceptionable model was required, one that combined a beautiful face with a perfect figure. Herbert waited for months without finding one to his taste. One day he happened to meet, going into the house where he had his studio, one of the most lovely women he had ever seen; perfect face, perfect figure."

Mr. Bulfinch paused and took a pinch of snuff, with an air of self-satisfaction. There was such an inherent conceit in the man that whenever he referred to the actions or qualities of other people it was with an air and manner intended to convey to you the idea that he, Bulfinch, was to be credited with anything deserving in connection with them. When, therefore, he referred to the perfect face and figure, one might have imagined by his manner that he arrogated to himself the powers of Omnipotence, and had been himself instrumental in creating them.

Sir Arthur had moved slightly in his chair when Bulfinch reached this point in his narrative. His eyes were still fixed on the newspaper, but it was evident that he no longer dwelt on the contents. Bulfinch went on:

"Herbert found from the maid that she was the wife of a

man in bad health, lodging in a miserable attic at the top of the house. Found also that the man had seen better days, and that the wife had become an artist's model in order to support her husband. Possibly he was idle, possibly he had no brains, possibly he drank: his wife, at any rate, supported him in the way I have named. Well, gentlemen, Herbert, thinking she would exactly suit him, made overtures to her, and found that she was only too glad to sit. Upshot of it was that she sat once or twice. Herbert paid her liberally,—most liberally, I believe. The odd part of it was that she disappeared with her husband immediately after, and Herbert has never been able to find her since, though he has often wanted her."

Bulfinch rewarded himself for this long narration with another pinch of snuff. The story had excited sufficient interest to satisfy even *his* vanity. Deverell still sat with his face partly screened by the newspaper, and made no sign, though not a word had been lost on him. Boyd was the next to speak.

"A singular story," he said. "I know most of the good models; we have them at the Academy. What was her name?"

There was a sudden rustle of the paper which Deverell held in his hand, as this question was put, but he still sat immovable.

"Name?" replied Bulfinch: "let me see, let me see; I made a note of it at the time, the story struck me so much."

He took out a note-book, as he said this, and began turning over the leaves.

"Here it is," he continued, "Name—Mrs. Morley. Address—15, Charlotte Street."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"YOU LIE."

DEVERELL started to his feet.

"You lie!" he cried, grasping the heavy riding-cane, which lay on the table.

Bulfinch looked up from his note-book, pretending to be oblivious to the presence of the man who thus accused him.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, as if doubtful from what quarter the words had come.

In another moment Deverell had crossed the room, and stood before him. His face was livid with rage, his frame quivered, and the firm grip with which he held the cane boded ominously for Bulfinch.

"I say you lie," he replied, staring the lawyer full in the face.

Boyd seemed struck with a sudden and painful recollection. "What insanity not to have remembered this!" he muttered. Then he advanced and took Sir Arthur by the arm.

"Deverell, let me entreat you to keep calm: this is not a fit place to discuss such a matter."

The other put him aside with a sweep of his arm.

"Stand back!" he said, sternly: "this is my affair." Then he turned to the wondering bystanders.

"You most of you know, gentlemen, that I have had reverses. When I was in poverty I adopted the name of Morley; I lived for a time at 15, Charlotte Street. The lady this scoundrel has maligned was my wife, Lady Deverell!"

He drew himself up to his full height, with an expression

which seemed to dare them to the utterance of any further calumny.

Bulfinch, however, was not to be cowed. Much gold had engendered pluck, or, what passed as a substitute for it, bluster. He spoke out boldly.

"I know you of old, Sir Arthur,—you and your infernal pride. When I mentioned Mrs. Morley I neither knew that you were present, nor that she was Lady Deverell. You have applied an epithet to me which you shall recall. I can substantiate what I said, and I repeat it. Mrs. Morley, of Charlotte Street, sat for Herbert's picture of Lady Godiva as surely as I sit here."

It was a false move. A lie was a thing abhorrent to Deverell's nature, and he knew the man before him had lied in uttering these words. He laid a grasp of iron on his collar, and held him against the back of the chair.

"You hound!" he said, with a look of ineffable contempt. "You double liar! You knew I was in this room, for I saw you look at me. You knew I adopted the name of Morley, or you sent me a letter in that name. That is neither here nor there. Retract what you have said,—ay, every word of it,—or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

Boyd, who was overwhelmed with self-reproaches, again attempted to interfere.

"Deverell, calm yourself; for God's sake don't let us have a scene. It will be the talk of all London."

"Back! I say," cried Sir Arthur, with increased vehemence. "Am I to stand here and listen to this damnable aspersion on one who has been my better angel?—one so pure that it is pollution for this fellow to utter her name? Good God! what do you take me for?" He turned to Bulfinch: "Once more, I say, will you recall those words?"

"I will not: they are the truth."

Deverell raised the heavy cane.



"Then, by heaven! the consequences are on your own head!" he said, between his set teeth.

At this moment Herbert himself entered the room. Bulfinch caught sight of him instantly, and saw at the same time his salvation.

"Stop!" he cried, suddenly wrenching himself from Deverell's grasp. "If you don't believe me, perhaps this gentleman can bring some evidence to bear upon the matter. There is the painter himself."

- Herbert came forward. The whole scene filled him with amazement. He looked from one to the other for an explanation.

"What is it?" he inquired.

Bulfinch jerked his thumb towards Sir Arthur as he replied,—

"I want you simply to tell this maniac here, what model sat for your picture of Lady Godiva."

A look of intense annoyance passed over Herbert's face as he heard the words.

"I object to do so. Why does he wish to know?" he said.

"It is I who wish him to know," replied Bulfinch. "He chooses to disbelieve that story you told me about your model——"

Herbert interrupted him.

"Surely you have not repeated the story?" he said.

"Indeed I have."

"Then you must permit me to say it is a gross breach of confidence. I told it to you, thinking that, as the owner of the picture, it would make you feel an increased interest in it. I never dreamt it would become the talk of the clubs. It is unfair to an unfortunate woman,—unfair to me."

He was about to depart, but he was arrested by Sir Arthur.

"Stay, sir!" the latter said: "you do not understand. This man has cast a foul aspersion on my wife, Lady Deverell."

He calls on you to substantiate that aspersion. I call on you to deny it."

Herbert paused again in utter amazement.

"Lady Deverell!" he repeated, with intense surprise. "I know nothing of Lady Deverell."

Bulfinch laughed a coarse laugh.

"Oh, yes, you do; more than most of us!"

As the atrocious words fell from his lips, there was a look of disgust on the faces of all present. Some of them gave open expression to their feelings. "Shame! Shame! too bad!" they muttered, audibly. Deverell looked round with a scornful smile.

"Gentlemen, let me beg of you not to interfere. I will settle matters with this man presently. Mr. Herbert," he continued, turning quietly to the artist, "the charge is that my wife, when living at 15, Charlotte Street, under the name of Morley, sat to you as a professional model for your picture of Lady Godiva. I request you to tell this man to his face that he lies."

He paused. Herbert looked at him with amazement depicted in every line of his face; but he replied never a word.

"What! do you hesitate?" demanded Deverell, angrily. "You heard what I said?"

There was another ominous pause; then Herbert replied, calmly,—

"I did; but I must decline to answer." He turned away a second time, and was about to quit the room, when his steps were again arrested.

"Decline!" echoed Deverell. "Do *you*, too, wish to be branded as a traducer of women, and a coward?"

Herbert turned quickly.

"Sir Arthur, you forget yourself. In private I will give you any explanation you desire; not here."

Bulfinch broke in.

"Herbert, you can't get out of it this way. I have been publicly called a liar. I call on you to clear me; in fact, I demand it!"

The artist, thus appealed to, looked from one to the other, uncertain what course to take. Then he turned to the bystanders.

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you. I am in a most unfortunate position. What can I do?"

One of the oldest members of the club, who had hitherto said but little, came forward. He was a man of high position and unquestionable integrity. Every one looked to him for a solution of the difficulty. He spoke very calmly, but with unmistakable decision.

"The matter has become too serious to be put aside. You are bound to answer. Does Mr. Bulfinch speak the truth, or does he not?"

"He does."

As the words passed the artist's lips, Deverell started as if he had received a sudden blow. He rallied instantly, scorning to betray any weakness before so many spectators; but his face was deadly pale, and his lips quivered in spite of all his efforts. He turned to Boyd, but, strive as he would, his voice faltered perceptibly.

"Do you know this gentleman, Boyd?"

"I do."

"And you believe what he says?"

"He is incapable of falsehood," Boyd said, hurriedly.

"Pray come away: this is too much for you."

"Stay," answered Deverell, turning to Herbert: "you pledge me your word, sir, that what you have said of my—of Lady Deverell,—is true."

"I do," the artist answered; "though I beg you to observe it has been forced from me. I shall regret it to the last day of my life."

There was no longer any room for doubt. An ashen hue, like death, overspread Deverell's face, and that rigidity of the facial muscles which comes upon us in extreme moments, almost prevented articulation, but he mastered his emotions by a terrible effort.

"I accept your regrets," he said, with a scornful courtesy which but feebly veiled the depth of the wound he had received. Then he turned to the lawyer, who still sat lounging in the easy-chair, with an insolent smile of triumph on his coarse features.

"Mr. Bulfinch, I have done you a foul injustice. I beg your pardon,—most humbly. The patience you have displayed condones your smaller offenses. Val, will you take me home?"

There was a sudden feebleness in the last words addressed to his old friend, who had come in during this painful scene, which touched the hearts of all save Bulfinch. Deverell saw the look of commiseration as he took his friend's arm, and his pride rushed to the surface again in a moment. He walked with a firm step towards the door, then turned.

"Gentlemen, I must apologize for this unseemly disturbance. I am not likely ever to trouble you again. Forgive me."

He passed his arm through Poingdestre's and went out.

For some minutes not a word was uttered. Bulfinch was the first to break the silence.

"So much for the pride of the Deverells," he said. "Boyd, you'll play a rubber?"

Boyd took his hat from the table. "Pardon me, Mr. Bulfinch, I've other matters to attend to," he said, as he left the room.

"Gregory, you will?" Bulfinch continued.

"Not to-day, thanks," the sportsman replied.

The lawyer looked annoyed. "Hang it, we must make up a rubber. Jerningham, you'll stay?"

"I must beg you to excuse me, Mr. Bulfinch," Jerningham said, turning on his heel.

Bulfinch looked more and more uneasy.

"Have I gone too far?" he said to himself, as he rose from his chair, and gazed after the retreating members, who evidently fought shy of him. "Anyway," he continued, "I've had my revenge for that day in the hunting-field. The pride of the Deverells has sunk pretty low by this time, I should say. Well, if they won't play, I'll console myself with a beefsteak and a bottle of port."

---

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE VILLA AT CHISWICK.

THE villa at Chiswick, in which the Deverells had taken up their abode, was part of the property which came to them from Mrs. Montagu Gore. It was not one of the imposing mansions you meet with farther up the river beyond Richmond Bridge, with close shaven lawns sloping down to the water's edge; with flower-beds where not a flower is out of place, and where not a daisy dare show its meek eye on the grassy slopes without suffering instant death by decapitation at the hands of the inexorable gardener, by means of his traveling guillotine, the patent lawn-cutter. Between the villa in question and the river-bank a narrow road ran, not much frequented, it is true, but still a public promenade. A confused mass of shrubs shut it out from the lower windows, and from the upper ones the eye wandered over a broad ex-

panse of river, and of pasture on the other side, which were very fair to look upon.

After the lovely scenery and climate of Madeira, it was something not to have to return to the dull London streets. Visions of Norton Towers, with its far-reaching woods and vales and blue seas, would sometimes intrude on the memory of the inmates; but when they contrasted their present lot with their wretched existence a few months before, they were more than content, and felt that it would be downright ingratitude to repine.

There was a conservatory, too, thrown out from the back drawing-room, and leading by a flight of steps to the garden in the rear of the house. This garden was well shut in by trees, and, not being subjected to the everlasting trimming of most suburban retreats, presented a certain amount of natural beauty to the eye, and was quite sufficiently secluded to enable Lady Deverell to pass many pleasant hours therein. The garden and the conservatory, during the absence of her husband, were her great delight. She was devoted to flowers, as all women of a truly feminine disposition are. It will be a bad time for the flowers, if the advocates for women's rights become supreme. A woman who wishes to usurp the duties of the other sex to the neglect of her own must be more masculine in thought and sentiment than man himself; and if the supporters of the cause should ever adopt the male costume, which is doubtless in their catalogue of "rights," depend on it they will never condescend to a flower in the button-hole.

On the afternoon of the day recorded in the last chapter, Lady Deverell was seated in the drawing-room from which the conservatory opened, talking to her constant friend, Mrs. Boyd. The Boyds had returned from the continent some weeks before, and the popular R.A. was busy from morning till night with his fashionable sitters. Blanche was con-

strained, therefore, to spend much time alone, and she had seized the first opportunity after the return of the Deverells to run down and have a long gossip. '

She had been chatting for over an hour, and had risen to depart, but her friend was determined not to lose her so soon, and had pressed her to stay and dine.

"Will Mr. Boyd be expecting you back?" she asked.

"No, I think not. He dines at some great city feast to-day. I have no doubt he would be glad to see me before he starts, but he wouldn't be so selfish as to wish me to spend the evening by myself. He's been very good lately, so I graciously gave my permission for him to go to this dinner, and in return he has actually promised to go shopping with me to-morrow."

"Then he *must* be an angel."

"He'll be an archangel if he gets through Marshall and Snelgrove's without a groan. Michael himself couldn't do it. But, my dearest Kate, I am so delighted to think that all your troubles are over. I can scarcely talk of anything else. I suppose you are actually rich again?"

"Not rich; but we have enough if we live economically. Was it not good of dear old Sir John Bolt. He actually arranged with the lawyers before he went abroad to supply funds for carrying on the chancery suit. Arthur would never let him know the full extent of our troubles, because he was sure the dear old man would insist on helping us, out of his slender means. We little knew that he was helping us in spite of ourselves. We had long before given up the affair as hopeless. Every one said the estate would be eaten up by the expenses. Sir John went abroad quite easy in his mind, thinking we had enough to live upon, with care. Poor old man! how little he knew what we had to endure!"

"Dear Kate, you must indeed have had a terrible life."

"Do not talk of it. It was not the work that troubled me,

but the deception. Even you, dear Blanche, do not know all that I had to undergo. There are some circumstances connected with that time which must haunt me to my dying day!"

She turned away with a shudder, caused by the bare recollection of her sufferings.

"Come, then, dear, we will not dwell on them," Blanche said. Then, to change the subject, she added, "You have not shown me the plants you brought home with you."

"They are in the conservatory. By the way, you have not seen our conservatory. It is not much to boast of, after Norton, but it is better than nothing."

"Does Sir Arthur still fret much at the loss of the old place?"

"Naturally. I believe it is scarcely ever out of his thoughts; though he says nothing. It is such a peculiar aggravation, too, that his old aversion, Mr. Bulfinch, should have the place. I feel quite sick at heart when I think of it."

They had strolled out to the conservatory, and stood there a short time examining some rare exotics; then they went into the garden. They had not been unobserved. Our old friend Susan had entered the room just as they left it, and now stood in her familiar way watching her mistress with looks of admiration.

Time and change of scene had wrought a marvelous transformation in Susan. No sooner had Lady Deverell come into possession of the money settled on her by her brother, than her thoughts reverted to the loving, humble friend who had been so devoted to her in her days of bitter trial. She had made an application to Susan's mistress, but that inexorable woman had insisted on the fulfillment of the legal term of service. Susan had, therefore, been unable to accompany Lady Deverell to Madeira, but it was arranged that she was to go out to her as soon as she could possibly leave. The poor



girl, whose existence had been so monotonous that she could only just remember the time when she had not been among the "blacks and the beetles," who had done battle with London fog and London smoke for so many years that the memory of what a green field was like had grown very faint and dim, was obliged to face the dangers of the deep alone; and, to be strictly accurate, I am bound to say she faced them very badly. The blacks and the beetles would have been like glimpses of heaven to her, could she have returned to them in the midst of the throes of sea-sickness; and her terrors during a stiff gale that caught them in the Bay of Biscay were so extreme that it required three stalwart British tars to detach her from the astonished steward, around whose agile form she had, in her agony, wound her arms, with a tenacity only to be understood by those who have visited the sub-aqueous caverns of the sea-devil in company with Victor Hugo and thrilled through the terrible encounter which befell therein.

Susan, having performed her part as a "toiler of the sea," was doubly astonished at the peace and beauty which greeted her on every side when she set foot in nature's sanitarium. Only one thing caused a speck upon the cloudless heaven of her delight,—the thought of the voyage home again. There was, however, no longer any excuse to be dirty, and in a marvelously short space of time, under the ever-watchful supervision of Lady Deverell, she expanded into such a fresh, healthy, buxom damsel that many a native heart went pit-a-pat at her approach, and she might have settled down, over and over again, into married life and domestic bliss, if any thing could have induced her to leave her kind mistress.

She had, after having acquired some little experience, been elevated to the post of lady's-maid, and now shone resplendent in the newest of print dresses and appropriate ribbons. As her mistress descended the steps leading to the garden, and was lost to view, Susan broke into one of her old soliloquies.

"How happy she is, and how happy she deserves to be! [If ever there was an angel on earth, it's my lady! How good she has been to me! I hardly know myself in a dress without a speck upon it, and with a face as clean as a newly-washed baby. What pains she has taken with my education, too, my manners, and everything! Fancy my being a real lady's-maid! When I look back to the days of beetles and blacks, I seem like another Cinderella. And Buttons, too! I wonder what has become of the boy? I think perhaps I judged him harshly. Very few boys have the strength to resist such a breaking-out of buttons."

Her reverie was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Sir Arthur. On turning to see who it was, Susan almost started with terror. There was an expression on his face such as he had never seen before,—a look of deadly wrath and indignation, which, like the horse-shoe on the brow of the bedgauntlet, seemed fixed and immovable.

"Where is Lady Deverell?" he inquired, sternly.

Susan was so impressed by his look that she could hardly collect herself sufficiently to answer.

"In the garden with Mrs. Boyd, Sir Arthur," she said, in trembling voice. "Shall I call her ladyship?"

"Yes."

Susan departed, not knowing what to think. Deverell seated himself by the side of the table. The old unconquerable pride possessed him soul and body. He looked like a man in whom the softer attributes of our nature had never found place, the very channels of whose blood were congealed and turned to ice by the wintry frost of pride. So he sat until his wife, followed by her friend, entered the room. She came over to him in the old loving way, speaking as she advanced.

"Why, Arthur, you *are* good. I had no idea you would be home so early. I'm so very glad, for Blanche is here, and has promised to stay and dine. Why, what is the matter?"

happened before, and

was disastrous. He

"taking care of"

he touched his cap

The stranger said

the wood towards the

Mrs. Moreau's

with some curiosity

and she called after him

"Will ee please to

The stranger turned

expression was on his

"No, thank you,

round by the church

lage. Good-morning

"Why, who ever

self. "Lord bless me

about like that! He

too. Perhaps the old

Peter, you'll be heing

Give it to mother, do

she suddenly added, as she saw the expression of his face, and almost recoiled before it.

Sir Arthur did not respond to her, but rose and advanced to meet her friend. When he spoke, there was a hollow, unnatural tone in his voice, which awed them into silence.

"Mrs, Boyd, you know it is not in my nature to appear inhospitable, but it is imperative that I should be alone with my wife to-night. I heard you were here, and you will forgive my having arranged with Mr. Poingdestre to drive you home. He is waiting for you below. Believe me, it is a cruel necessity which obliges me to act in this way."

They were both about to speak, but he stopped them by a motion of his hand.

"Pray do not ask any questions. I cannot answer them. You will know the cause only too soon. Let me escort you to the carriage?" He turned to his wife: "Stay here," he said, briefly; then he gave his arm to Mrs. Boyd, and they left the room.

Lady Deverell stood looking after them in positive terror.

"What can it be?" she said. Then a wild thought darted into her mind. "Is it possible he has heard? Has this cruel fate overtaken me, just as I thought such intense happiness was again within my grasp. No, no! it cannot be!"

Sir Arthur re-entered the room. With all her old, confiding, loving feeling, she advanced towards him with outstretched hands. There was no response in the face of her husband. He motioned her to a seat, and then stood before her silently.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"ARTHUR, why do you look at me in that way?"

The question was put with a sinking at her heart, such as she had never felt before in connection with her husband. All her former trials had been in some way apart from any influence of his. No cloud had ever darkened the horizon of their love. Her cares had all been born of her anxiety for him. He himself had yielded her nothing but happiness.

"Silence! Do not speak to me," he answered; then he paused again, as if gathering strength to proceed. He went on. "I am here to put a question to you which I charge you on your soul to answer truly. It is said—publicly at the club—that you, the wife of Arthur Deverell, were guilty of an act which a modest woman would blush even to name; which, if not denied, must blast and blacken all my future life. I ask you if this charge is true."

She sank down on the couch by his side, with a low moan, and buried her face in her hands.

"I have my answer," he said. "You need not put it into words. From this time forth we are strangers to each other. If one so shameless needs consolation, let it be in the fact that I do not leave my curse upon you."

He turned, and was about to quit the room, but she started up suddenly.

"Oh, Arthur! be merciful. It was for your sake alone, as God is my witness!"

He turned on her suddenly: "For my sake," he answered,

fiercely : "do you dare to put the shameful deed on me? You know I would rather have died, a starved beggar in the streets, than have lived to know your shame. Do you remember that night," he added, in a deeper tone, "when I said to you that if you were guilty of a single deed that could bring a blush to the brow, I could never look upon your face again? At that time I would have cut off my right hand rather than believe you capable of an act like this."

"In pity hear me," she again entreated.

"Hear you!" he continued. "What *can* I hear that will throw a veil over the past? Would you enter on excuses? I tell you again that I would have died all too willingly to have saved you from the shame. Great heaven! I wonder my brain has borne even the thought of it, much less to hear the deed bandied about by foul-mouthed men, who gloat on woman's frailties."

The thought seemed to incite him to madness: the drops stood upon his forehead, all powers of reasoning deserted him, and he stood there a personification of blind, insensate rage, that was terrible to witness. It was more than the wife could bear. She threw herself prostrate at his feet.

"Spare me, for the love of heaven! I cannot endure this."

There was an agony in the tone which might have moved him, if he had not passed the bounds of reason; but he still raved on.

"Spare you! Did you spare me when you sold my race to shame? Do you think I can ever look on the face of my fellow-men as I did before? Even now I see them point the finger of scorn, and say, 'There goes the man whose wife sold her charms to a painter of naked heroines, who sat like a common harlot!'"

"Stop!" she cried, rising suddenly to her feet. Her voice sounded clear above his own, and arrested his wild words.

She stood before him face to face, her cheeks flushing with righteous indignation, and a defiance in her eye which he had never before witnessed. Then she went on fearlessly: "I have endured much. I will not endure this. I have been to you a true, loving wife. I have sacrificed myself as no woman ever sacrificed herself before, to save a life without which my own would be worthless. You can never know—none can ever know—the bitter pang that sacrifice involved,—the nights of tearless agony, when you whom I had saved were sleeping calmly by my side; the shame—the bare remembrance of which haunts me even now. Let all this pass. But for the honor of my sex, standing here as I do, alone and defenseless, I repel your foul imputation with utter scorn, and challenge you to repeat it again, if you *dare*."

She paused with heaving heart and flashing eyes. He was about to speak, but she stopped him again.

"Stay. I have not done yet. There are insults which make submission a fault, even in a wife. Such an insult you have put upon me, and you *shall* hear me. You have heard my shame,—you have not heard my miserable story. You thought the wretched pittance we had saved was sufficient to maintain us through your long and painful illness. You were wrong. In spite of all my endeavors, in spite, I confess it now, of semi-starvation on my part, it was gone before you had been two months ill. I hid the fact from you. I strove, as never woman strove before, to maintain a cheerful countenance when my heart felt ready to break. Often, when you were sleeping, I was threading my weary way through the streets at night in search of any employment, no matter what, that might eke out our wretched means of subsistence,—with a heart so heavy that at times I was almost tempted to beg from the passers-by; but I respected your injunctions even then, and never begged from a living soul. Chance threw me in the way of Mr. Boyd, and through him I found

that my face was a marketable commodity in the world of art; so I hired myself out to those who chose to employ me."

"You did,—with a lie upon your lips," he said, bitterly.

"The deception was to spare you, and for that alone. The worst temptation came upon me at a time when I was almost mad. Your life hung upon my resolve. Had there been one friend near to whom I could have appealed, I would, in that extreme moment, have made appeal, even though I disobeyed you. There *was* no friend. The Boyds were abroad. I was alone in the heart of this great pitiless city. I knew the money that came from my sacrifice would save you. I made that sacrifice. Had it periled my soul, I would have done the same!"

The intensity of her sufferings made her utterance sublime. Even Deverell, through all his pride, felt himself in the presence of a loftier nature than his own; but he would not abate one jot of that pride, and so fell back on the meanness which springs from it.

"Enough of this," he said. "The life you have saved is worthless under such a stain. I might have foreseen this when I stooped to marry a keeper's daughter."

It was a cowardly thrust, and she felt it to be so. She could not wholly conceal a look of scorn as she replied,—

"Possibly you are right. A woman of noble birth might have let you die rather than sacrifice her pride. Thank heaven, I was not so born! I cannot forego my nature. I feel that, in the sight of God, it is a nobler thing to sink as low even as I have done for the life of one we love, than to let that life be sacrificed to the heartless, futile pride which springs from noble birth."

She sank upon a couch. Her weak frame could no longer bear the strain that had been put upon it, but it was lost on her husband, and he wished to bring the scene to an end.

"It is useless bandying words," he said. "Even if *I* could



forget the shame, the world would not forget it. The very picture which records the deed hangs on the walls of a man I loathe. I see him now, pointing it out to friends as despicable as himself, with a chuckle of malignant glee at my disgrace. Ay, and in years to come the story will be handed down: 'the woman who sat for that picture, bought by a handful of gold, was Arthur Deverell's wife.' Oh, it is maddening! We part to-night."

She bowed her head in proud submission.

"Let it be so, then. Dearly as I love you, Arthur, I cannot, after what has passed, stoop to beg for mercy at the hands of one who sets the fleeting opinion of the cold, narrow world above the love that would last through time and eternity. I, too, feel that the end has come."

"It has," he replied. "Before a week has passed, I shall have left the scene of my disgrace far behind. The fortune we have inherited will be ample for all your wants; it will not be touched by me. I vowed when this blow fell on me that after this night I would never see your face again. The Deverells are a stubborn race: that vow will not be broken."

He moved towards the door. Her head had sunk lower and lower as he uttered those last words, and as he passed the doorway she was still silent. An instant after, the closing of the hall-door below brought all the love of the wife into her heart again, and she flew to the stairs with a heart-wrung cry.

"Arthur! my love, my husband, gone! O God!"

She fell prostrate to the ground,—deserted,—utterly alone.

No, not alone. A quick footstep came in response to her cry, and in another moment Susan was kneeling by her side. Loving arms were wound about her, and bore her to a couch, while a loving humble heart soothed her with words of devotion. But they could not fill the aching void which settled upon her weary spirit and remained her portion through the long months of anguish which followed.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## VAL POINGDESTRE.

LATE that night Val Poingdestre was aroused by a loud knock at the hall-door.

He had just put himself into a smoking-coat and slippers, and was musing, over the fire in his sanctum, on the events of the afternoon. His wife was slightly indisposed, and had retired early.

Nothing had occurred for a very long time to cause Val Poingdestre such perturbation of spirit. He had always been deeply attached to Deverell, and entertained a regard amounting almost to affection for his wife. He had congratulated himself so heartily, too, on the thought that they were placed once more in comfortable circumstances, and that they would be within easy distance.

This disastrous affair had, therefore, fallen like a blight on the prospect of their future happy intercourse. He had mentioned as much as he knew of the affair to his wife, and they both professed themselves utterly unable to conjecture what would be the result. Of the particulars of the long illness, and the terrible strait to which Lady Deverell had been reduced, they were of course ignorant. Even Boyd was unaware of the full extent of their privations, for he had left town on his wedding-trip before the worst stage of their difficulties had been reached.

"Who the deuce can that be?" said Val, as he heard the knock. "I hope to heaven Arthur has done nothing rash! I didn't at all like his looks when I left him this afternoon."

His thoughts tended in the right direction, for, a minute or two after, the servant announced Sir Arthur Deverell.

He entered hurriedly. Val was startled when he saw his face. It was white and drawn, as if he had gone through months of sorrow.

"Deverell, what on earth brings you here at this hour?" gasped Val. "I hope nothing else has gone wrong?"

"Everything has gone wrong. I feel,—God knows what I feel,—more like a maniac than a rational being. I've come to you to-night to make a request. If you grant it, it will help me to save the small amount of brain I have left."

"What is it?"

"Lend me two hundred pounds."

Val rose and walked to the library table, which stood in the large bay-window. Taking out his check-book, he wrote a check for the required amount, and handed it to Deverell without a word.

The latter paused a moment before folding it up.

"It may be a long time before I can repay you,—years, perhaps," he said.

"Sink that," answered his friend. "If you don't pay me at all, it won't trouble me. Now," he said, resuming his seat, "what does it all mean? I don't ask because I've lent you the money, as you know; but, as an old friend, I thought I might claim the right to know how matters stand."

"That's easily answered. I leave England to-morrow, if I can get away. If not, as soon after as possible."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

Val looked steadily at the ash of his cigar for full two minutes; then he knocked it off against the mantel-piece; then he twisted the cigar itself round and round between his finger and thumb, until it nearly went out; then he put it between his lips.

"You're wrong," he exclaimed, sitting back in his chair, and drawing his weed up again vigorously.

"Ah," said Deverell, with a bitter laugh, "that's what you'll all say. I'm quite prepared for that. But put yourself in my place, and I wonder what sort of a story you would tell then?"

Val saw that it was in vain to argue with him; but a sudden idea flashed across his mind, and he set his wits to work to devise some way of carrying it out.

"You'll have some liquor?" he said.

"As much as you like to give me," was the quick response.

"Try a cigar."

"No, thanks."

Deverell sat with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fixed immovably on the ground. Val rose to ring the bell. There was a strip of paper lying on the mantel-piece; as he approached it he whipped out a pencil from his waistcoat-pocket, and, having rung the bell, he glanced across the room at Deverell.

He was still sitting in deep abstraction, apparently quite oblivious to his friend's movements. As quick as thought, Val wrote the two words "Come down" on the paper, folded it once, and scribbled the name of his wife on the reverse; then he concealed it in his hand.

A moment after, a servant opened the door in answer to the bell.

"Some brandy and seltzer, Holmes; and, oh, by the by, bring me the brown cigar-case from the table in my dressing-room."

"Yes, sir."

Holmes departed. Val seated himself exactly opposite Deverell.

"You're sure you won't smoke?"

"Quite."

"It's a mistake. If I were going to be hanged to-morrow I'd have my weed."

This time there was no reply. Val purposely abstained from any further observations until Holmes reappeared with the tray. He placed it on the table and then advanced to his master with the cigar-case.

As Poingdestre had placed himself immediately opposite Deverell, Holmes intervened between his master and the latter as he approached. With a quick movement, Val placed his finger on his lip and then pointed upwards, holding up, as he did so, the paper which he had taken from the mantel-piece. Holmes, though somewhat astonished, was equal to the occasion. He made no sign, but quietly took the paper as he handed the cigar-case, and then left the room.

Val seemed to breathe more freely. His faith in his wife was unlimited. He saw that he could not venture to storm the fortress of his friend's pride single-handed. Moreover, it was a moment in which a woman's influence would be worth the influence of a dozen men; but he knew if Deverell had suspected his intention no power on earth would have induced him to stay.

At last, Deverell himself broke the silence.

"Val, will you let me lie down on your sofa there to-night?"

"Most decidedly not," was the emphatic rejoinder. "You shall have a bed like a Christian, and welcome, but you shan't sleep in this room if I know it."

Deverell did not respond. His thoughts were back again in the house he had left forever. All the past rose up before him, as in a dream. He thought of the far-off happy time when, on the bright spring morning he remembered so well, he had first seen her who was destined to become the guiding star of his existence. He remembered the influence she had upon him even then,—an influence which time only softened,

"You're wrong," he exclaimed, sitting back in his chair, and drawing his weed up again vigorously.

"Ah," said Deverell, with a bitter laugh, "that's what you'll all say. I'm quite prepared for that. But put yourself in my place, and I wonder what sort of a story you would tell then?"

Val saw that it was in vain to argue with him; but a sudden idea flashed across his mind, and he set his wits to work to devise some way of carrying it out.

"You'll have some liquor?" he said.

"As much as you like to give me," was the quick response.

"Try a cigar."

"No, thanks."

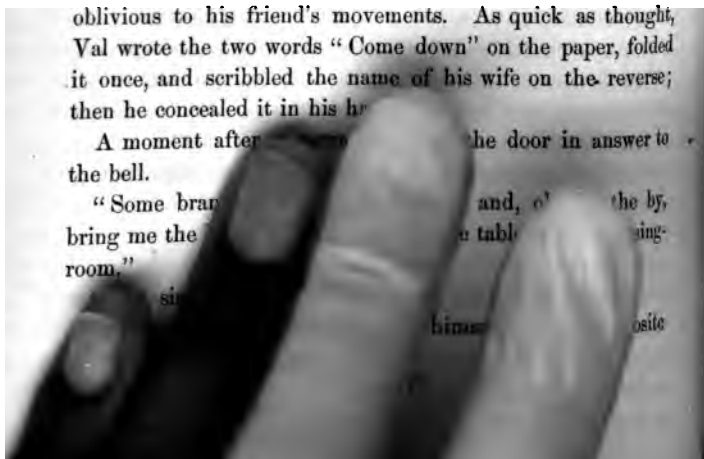
Deverell sat with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fixed immovably on the ground. Val rose to ring the bell. There was a strip of paper lying on the mantel-piece; as he approached it he whipped out a pencil from his waistcoat-pocket, and, having rung the bell, he glanced across the room at Deverell.

He was still sitting in deep abstraction, apparently quite oblivious to his friend's movements. As quick as thought, Val wrote the two words "Come down" on the paper, folded it once, and scribbled the name of his wife on the reverse; then he concealed it in his hand.

A moment after he rang the bell, and he opened the door in answer to the bell.

"Some brandy, please," he called out, and, on the by, bring me the table-sing-

room."



It's a mistake. If I were going to be hanged to-morrow have my weed."

his time there was no reply. Val purposely abstained from any further observations until Holmes reappeared with tray. He placed it on the table and then advanced to his seat with the cigar-case.

As Poingdestre had placed himself immediately opposite Deverell, Holmes intervened between his master and the latter as he approached. With a quick movement, Val placed his cigar on his lip and then pointed upwards, holding up, as he did so, the paper which he had taken from the mantel-piece. Deverell, though somewhat astonished, was equal to the occasion. He made no sign, but quietly took the paper as he was offered the cigar-case, and then left the room.

Val seemed to breathe more freely. His faith in his wife was unlimited. He saw that he could not venture to storm the fortress of his friend's pride single-handed. Moreover, it was a moment in which a woman's influence would be worth the influence of a dozen men; but he knew if Deverell had rejected his intention no power on earth would have induced him to stay.

At last, Deverell himself broke the silence.

"Val, will you let me lie down on your sofa there to-night?"

"Most decidedly not," was the emphatic rejoinder. "You shall have a bed like a Christian, and welcome, but you shan't sleep in this room if I know it."

Val did not respond. His thoughts were back again to the time when he had left forever. All the past rose up before him in a dream. He thought of the far-off happy time when on that bright spring morning he remembered so well, when he had seen her who was destined to become the guiding influence. He remembered the influence she had exerted on him then,—an influence which time only softened,

know. See what she says to the course you propose to pursue."

"Impossible!" was the quick reply. "It is bad enough to have to discuss the subject with you. I trust I may never be called on to do so with a delicate-minded woman. Mrs. Poingdestre will appreciate my motive, and forgive my refusing to say one word more."

The three had seated themselves near the open window, through which the cool night-air stole in from the creeper-laden balcony, bearing a perfume from the reviving flowers, which had been scorched by the fierce sunbeams all through the day. The window overlooked the square in which the house was situated. It was tolerably quiet at this hour, and the time seemed peculiarly adapted for inviting confidences, had Deverell been one to seek for counsel in matters of a purely personal nature.

Val had made up his mind, however, that at all risks his wife should know the state of affairs.

"Deverell will stay here to-night, my dear," he resumed; "you will see that they get a room ready for him."

Astonishment was so strongly depicted on Mrs. Poingdestre's face that Sir Arthur could not with any degree of courtesy decline saying a word in explanation.

"If, as I suppose, you have heard of this miserable business," he said, bitterly, "you will hardly be surprised when I tell you that I have left my home forever."

Mrs. Poingdestre started. Lady Deverell had always been an immense favorite of hers. She had heard the bare details of the scene in the club, of course, and she was convinced that much remained to be told. She felt, too, after the confession which had just been made, that if she would save her friend—concerning whom she was certain some palliating circumstances remained untold—this was her opportunity. She was not a woman to shrink from any course, however distaste-



ful, if it became a duty, and in this case she had no doubt on that point.

"Pardon my saying that I *am* surprised. It would be absurd affectation in me to pretend to be ignorant of what has occurred——"

Sir Arthur rose from his chair.

"Let me entreat you to hear me patiently," Mrs. Poingdestre continued. "You cannot, I know, refuse to hear a woman plead for one of her own sex; more especially when that other is one so dear to me as Lady Deverell."

A look of intense anguish passed over Sir Arthur's face. He sat down again, and strove hard to hide his emotion. His silence was so much gained, Mrs. Poingdestre thought. She resumed:

"A less sincere friend might hesitate to pursue so painful a subject; but, as you have told me your intention, I must say what I think. Nothing will ever induce me to believe that Mr. Bulfinch spoke the whole truth to-day: the circumstances must have been extreme which could have induced a woman like your wife to be guilty of such an act,—if indeed she be guilty."

"Of that there is no doubt," groaned Deverell. "She does not venture to deny it. Mrs. Poingdestre, let me entreat you to say no more."

"I would not willingly pain a single human creature, much less an old friend like you. You must forgive my asking if you have clearly ascertained her motive. I know there must be something which has not yet been explained."

"Nothing is explained which will excuse the act. The wretched excuse that it was to save my life is no consolation to me. I would have died rather than endure what I do now."

He rose and paced wearily up and down the room. Val, all this time, sat smoking his cigar near the window. He

felt that the cause was in better hands than his own; so he said nothing.

"And was this the fact?" pursued Mrs. Poingdestre.

"Yes. She says so, and I'm bound to believe her. Let me do her the justice to say that she had no friend near, no money, no adviser. To save my life it was necessary to get money at once; and so—well, you know the rest. For God's sake, do not torture me any more."

There was a tone of passionate entreaty in the words which went straight to the hearts of his listeners, but there rose up in the wife's heart the thought of that other wife alone in her dreary home,—deserted by him for whom she had sacrificed so much, for whom she had undergone such unheard-of suffering.

Few women are lenient towards the frailties of their own sex. Mrs. Poingdestre was an exception to the rule. With a cold unsympathetic exterior, she had a heart which could feel for every phase of human suffering. More than this, she possessed the most divine gift of all, charity. She felt, moreover, that even now she had not been made acquainted with all the circumstances connected with this most distressing affair. She resolved that before another twelve hours had elapsed she would know the whole truth, would seek out the deserted wife, and, if it were possible to make Sir Arthur defer his departure for that time, she still hoped to effect a reconciliation. Then she would do battle with the scandalized world of fashion. Her close connection by birth with some of the best names in the land, together with her enormous fortune,—in these days the latter alone would have been all-sufficient,—had always made her opinion paramount in whatever society she cultivated; and she well knew that if she extended the hand of sympathy to Lady Deverell the world would at once be brought to regard her as a martyr rather than a Magdalen.

Her course, therefore, was clear. However deeply she might wound, she must endeavor to extort a promise from Sir Arthur, this very night, not to resort to any extreme course. If she could succeed in this, she did not despair of the future. She returned to the charge again.

"I know how terribly painful this subject must be to you, but I cannot forget that the sufferings of her you leave behind must be beyond all comparison greater than yours. I should be false to my own sex, false to every instinct of humanity, if I did not attempt to say something in her justification."

Sir Arthur stared at her in mute surprise.

"You cannot attempt to defend her," he said.

"I can do more," Mrs. Poingdestre replied, quickly. "If what you say is true, and she was driven to this by cruel necessity, though it is difficult to realize circumstances so extreme, I can not only attempt to defend her, but I can give her a closer place in my affection than ever she had before. And now let me entreat you to reconsider your determination."

Deverell was terribly moved,—not in the way she who pleaded so earnestly could have wished, but because he felt he was in some way entrapped into this argument, which was utterly distasteful to him, and utterly useless as a means of shaking his determination. He still moved restlessly up and down the room.

"Mrs. Poingdestre, it is against my very nature to appear wanting in courtesy, but on this subject you must pardon my saying I am inexorable. I cannot listen to anything further in connection with it."

He stood with his back to the mantel-piece, gazing at her with an air of determination which a less courageous heart than that of the woman who confronted him would have shrunk from combating. There was no such fear in this

woman's heart, however. She had a duty to perform, a hard one, it is true, but she faced it bravely. She had left the window, and was seated by the library table, facing Sir Arthur. Val still remained by the open window, quietly smoking.

"You will at least let me ask what course you intend to take," Mrs. Poingdestre said.

"My course is very simple. I leave England by the first ship I can find bound for Australia. When far away from the scene of my disgrace, I may to a certain extent forget it; here I never could. My occupation will be farming. To enable me to carry out my plans, your good husband has lent me two hundred pounds."

"You do not intend to return?"

"Never."

"It is a cruel act,—one that I could never have thought you capable of, Sir Arthur."

Almost for the first time in her life, Mrs. Poingdestre was visibly moved. She rose from her chair, while the small well-shaped hand she rested on the table shook with the intensity of her emotion.

A strange look of anger flashed into Sir Arthur's face.

"I cannot argue with you, Mrs. Poingdestre. I should forget myself. The only course I can adopt is to take my leave."

He strode towards the door. Val rose abruptly, and stood uncertain what to do. Not so his wife. With the quickness of thought she passed in front of Sir Arthur, and stood between him and the door, placing her hand upon the lock.

Deverell stopped in utter amazement. Mrs. Poingdestre stood with her back to the door, gazing at him with an expression of contempt such as her countenance had never worn before. Her bosom heaved with excitement, and her large gray eyes were lit up with an intensity of expression which made her positively handsome.

Her husband rose from his seat, and stood looking on with astonishment depicted in every line of his face, wondering what was to happen next. Deverell was the first to speak.

"You presume on the privilege of your sex, Mrs. Poingdestre. I must request you to let me pass."

"Not until you have heard a woman's opinion of the cowardly course you would pursue. I could not have believed that any man, much less one with such exalted notions as yourself, could be guilty of the base desertion of a wife who has made such a sacrifice as this. It sickens me to think of it."

Deverell made a great effort to restrain his anger. "The fact that your sex renders you incapable of appreciating what a man must feel under these circumstances induces me to overlook your unjust words," he said.

"You cannot escape the discredit that way," she quickly retorted. "One man at least indorses my opinion,—as true and just a man as any that ever breathed."

She glanced towards her husband, who still refrained from uttering a word, though he bowed his head in acquiescence.

Deverell uttered an angry exclamation. "Ah," he said, bitterly, "it will be the same story, wherever I go, no doubt; but I wonder if it would be the same with a man who has undergone the same experience. Poingdestre, I must ask you to relieve me from this most painful, most absurd position. Request your wife to let me pass."

"You need not wait for that," Mrs. Poingdestre said. "I see it is worse than useless to argue with you. I would have stopped you for your own sake as well as hers. The time will come when you will bitterly repent this step,—ay, and stoop to beg her pardon for the cruel wrong you have done her."

She removed from the door, and sat down by the table, with a world of sorrow and sympathy in her face. Deverell strode into the hall without another word, and with head erect. Then Poingdestre came out of his trance. He stepped hastily after his friend.

"Arthur, you will not leave the house to-night? whatever has happened, we cannot part so."

"How can I accept hospitality from one who holds such an opinion of me as your wife does?"

"That doesn't affect the question. Go or stay to-morrow, if you like, but don't let it be said that Val Poingdestre turned his oldest friend out of doors in the midst of a grief like this."

Deverell was softened. He took his friend's hand, and wrung it warmly.

"As you will, Val. I won't refuse: only let me be alone."

Val led the way to his own dressing-room, and settled Deverell into an easy-chair, while he gave the requisite orders for a room to be prepared. He returned to him, and waited until the room was ready, then led the way to it himself.

"At least let your final decision stand over till to-morrow, Arthur. I shall see you in the morning. If you want anything in the night, or if you want me, ring that bell."

Deverell nodded his head, but only said, "Good-night," in reply, and then closed the door. As Val descended, he heard the key turn in the lock.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## A MIDNIGHT ENCOUNTER.

WHEN Val re-entered the library, he found, to his surprise, his wife seated with her bonnet and shawl on, waiting for him impatiently.

"Why, where on earth are you going?" he asked.

"To *her*, without a moment's delay. Will you get a cab and come with me?"

There was such perfect unanimity between the two that there was seldom occasion for many words. Val turned and left the room immediately.

He put on a light coat and felt hat, then went out and hailed the first cab, which he brought to the door.

Mrs. Poingdestre was waiting in the hall, while her maid was arranging a wrap round her throat. "I am sorry to keep you up, Ellis," she said, "but I may want you again. Have some tea ready in my room in the course of an hour."

"Yes, ma'am."

They stepped into the cab, and drove rapidly away. The cabman had received his instructions from the servant, who had known the villa at Chiswick in the time of Mrs. Montagu Gore. It was nearly two o'clock when they arrived there, but lights were still burning in the upper rooms. Val jumped out and rang the bell.

There was a sound of hurried feet running down-stairs. Then the door was opened by Susan. Her countenance fell when she saw Mr. Poingdestre.

"Oh, Lord! I hoped it was master," she exclaimed.

"I wish to heaven it was!" answered Val. "How is she, and where is she? Can my wife see her? She is in the cab."

This was not strictly true, for in her anxiety Mrs. Poingdestre had followed her husband, and now stood close behind him.

"Well, I'm thankful you are come, anyway," said Susan; "I've had a terrible time with her. I thought she'd go mad; but she's quieter now. Shall I tell her you're here, ma'am, or will you go up?"

"Let me go up. Where is she? In her own room?"

"Yes."

"Show me the way."

Susan ran up-stairs, followed by Mrs. Poingdestre. The next moment she was in the room, and the suffering wife was sobbing on her breast; while tears which had before refused to come at length burst forth to relieve the pent-up agony of the last few hours.

"I know all, dear," Mrs. Poingdestre whispered, as she wound her arms tightly around the slender form and put back the hair from the pale forehead. "Tell me one thing. Was there no possible resource but that?"

Lady Deverell let her head fall lower on her friend's breast to hide the burning blush which, even in the midst of her grief, suffused her face.

"None," she said. "His life hung upon a thread; they told me he might be dead in a week if I did not take him away. I had not a shilling in the world; not one friend near."

"Hush! I do not want to hear any more. You must come with me. All may yet be well."

Lady Deverell looked up suddenly. "Do you come from him?" she asked, with an anxiety painful to witness.

"Not with his knowledge. My husband has induced him



to stay the night. I have told him what I think. It is possible he may judge you more leniently in the morning. God grant he may! Now, come."

The words acted like a charm. In a very few minutes Lady Deverell had washed away the outward traces of her grief, and thrown on some wraps. Then Mrs. Poingdestre ran down-stairs, bidding her wait above. Val was at the foot of the stairs.

"Val, she is coming with me," said his wife. "She may not like to see even you at such a time as this. What had better be done?"

"I don't in the least mind the walk: besides, I may pick up a stray hansom."

"You are goodness itself, Val. You don't know how much I love you."

She threw her arms round his neck, and gave him a kiss that might well make a man happy, coming from so true a woman. Then she said, "Go into that room, while we pass, and mind you take care of yourself, dear. I shall sit up for you."

"All right."

He turned into the dining-room. Mrs. Poingdestre ran up-stairs again. Susan was with her mistress, fastening an extra button of her cloak.

"Susan, can you come?" asked Mrs. Poingdestre.

"Yes, if you give me two minutes to get my bonnet and tell the housemaid."

Within the time specified Susan was equipped. The three went down to the cab, entered it, and drove away. A fevered flush was on Lady Deverell's cheek, for hope had again revived in her heart. She was terribly weak, however, and sat leaning her head on her friend's shoulder, with one hand clasped in hers.

As the cab drove off, Val sallied forth from his hiding-

place, very much to the alarm of the maid who was closing the door. He soon reassured her, however, and left the house.

As ill luck would have it, there was not a cab to be seen, so he lit his cigar and walked briskly on in the bright moonlight, feeling that he and his wife had done a good night's work, and that things looked really hopeful.

In about an hour he reached Piccadilly. As he approached the door of a corner club-house, two men emerged and went on a few steps in advance of him. They were talking loudly, and both were a little unsteady in their gait.

"Ha! ha! ha! By George! you've not an idea what a fool he looked. I wish to heaven you'd been there! you'd never have forgotten it, by George!"

Val stood still. There was no mistaking that voice. It was Bulfinch. He followed on closely. "Always was infernal proud; knew him well, the beggar," responded the other, in a voice more inarticulate than his friend's.

"Ah! he's pretty well taken down by this time, d——n him. He won't snub me any more, I'm thinking. Fancy my lady, too, selling her charms to a beggarly artist. Ha! ha! ha! I've half a mind to make her an offer myself. A brilliant idea, by Jove!—Good Lord! what's that?"

He was almost throttled by a strong hand which grasped him by the collar behind,—thrust in between his neck and his neck-tie, and twisting the latter until he was nearly choking. Then he was shaken violently to and fro, as a rat is shaken by a terrier; then he heard a voice, which he knew too well, close behind him.

"You dirty hound! You don't escape me as you did your victim this morning. Think yourself lucky that I don't break every bone in your skin!"

Then came another shake, which seemed to Bulfinch's alarmed and excited faculties to be interminable; then he felt

a vigorous application of the foot of his foe, and he was violently propelled into the gutter, where he reeled and fell.

His intoxicated friend, scared at this sudden onslaught, had rushed off into the shelter of a porch, from which he surveyed the encounter in fancied security, uncertain what to do, or what might be the fate that would befall himself.

Bulfinch picked himself up. He was livid with rage. His coat was plastered with mud, his hat was crushed, his entire appearance was dilapidated.

"D—n you, you shall pay for this!" he almost screamed. "I know you, Mr. Poingdestre! You shall pay for this, I promise you!"

"Say one word more, and I'll treat you to a second dose, you scoundrel!" Val replied. His blood was fairly up, and he made a step forward.

Bulfinch retreated. "You coward!" he called out to his companion. "What do you mean by sneaking off like that? Police! police!" he vociferated, at the top of his voice.

Val fairly laughed out.

"Ay, call the police," he said, "and as sure as you stand there I'll give you in charge for being drunk and disorderly. You don't bear a particularly respectable appearance, and you may depend if they lay hold of you at this time of night you won't enjoy the luxury of a feather bed."

Bulfinch literally foamed with rage. He had sense enough left to see the force of Val's observation, and he stopped his shouts.

"Curse you," he said, "you sha'n't escape me. You shall be had up to-morrow as sure as I'm alive. I'll make you smart for this."

"No, you won't," responded Val, with provoking coolness. "You won't like your swell club friends to know you've been kicked into the gutter, and your antecedents won't bear too much scrutiny. Better not appear in a police-court: you'll

get there quite soon enough in a natural course of things. But, if you're bent on it, I've no objection to meet you there, and in that case *au revoir*!"

He passed on, leaving Bullfinch in a condition impossible to describe, swearing at Val, and pouring out the vials of his wrath upon his unfortunate companion, who now ventured to emerge from his temporary fortress.

Val had relieved himself considerably by this encounter, and approached his own house with quite a light step, and full of hope for the morrow.

His wife met him in the hall. "How is she now?" he inquired.

"Calmer. Poor darling! I trust I have not raised her hopes too much. She wanted to sit up all night, but I made her have some tea, and insisted on her going to bed. She is in my room: so you must manage as best you can in your dressing-room."

"All right. The couch there will do well enough for me. I mean to sleep well, for I've relieved my mind greatly."

His wife looked at him in surprise. "In what way?" she inquired.

"By thrashing that fellow Bullfinch."

"What *do* you mean? You've surely not seen him to-night?"

"By Jove, I have, though, and given him a thundering good kicking. I shall be a happier man for the rest of my life."

Val narrated the particulars, and even the staid Mrs. Poingdestre's face lighted up as she heard them.

"It was a very shocking proceeding of yours, Val," she said, looking at him, nevertheless, with increased admiration.

"Shocking, but remarkably gratifying. Don't you think so, dear?"

"Possibly."

"That's right.- Now, then, about the morning. What had I better do?"

"Go to Sir Arthur the first thing. See if he is at all softened: if he is, tell him his wife is here."

"But if he is not?"

"Then I don't know what we can do. Keep him here, at any rate, and trust to Providence. Heaven grant that some means may be found to effect a reconciliation!"

"Amen."

Mrs. Poingdestre returned to her room and lay down beside her friend, who, utterly worn out, had at length fallen into a deep sleep, and over her lovely face now and then a bright smile flitted. God's mercy had borne her away from her sorrows for a time into the far land of dreams.

Only for a time. When Val came down at nine in the morning, he inquired if anything had been heard of Sir Arthur, and the answer was "No." When his wife came down, she advised him to go up himself. He mounted the stairs, and rapped at his friend's door: there was no answer. He rapped again, and then walked in. The room was empty, the bed undisturbed, and on the table was a note addressed to himself. These were the contents:

"I cannot run the risk of another scene like that of last night. It was too painful: so I thought it better to leave without seeing you again. Ask your wife to think as well of me as she can, and for God's sake take care of *her*. ARTHUR DEVERELL."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## PERILS OF THE SEA.

THE good ship *Flying Cloud*, fifteen hundred tons register, teak built, copper fastened, classed A 1 at Lloyds', out from Liverpool twenty-nine days, and bound, with a general cargo and passengers, for Melbourne, lay becalmed in the tropics.

She was in the region known to navigators as "the doldrums." It lies in the mid Atlantic, between the southeast and northeast trade-winds,—a sort of neutral sea between the great currents setting from the south into the Gulf of Mexico, and then northward again in the great Gulf Stream, like a mighty river in the midst of the mightier ocean. It is a region of baffling winds, sudden squalls, and prolonged calms, such as send down the spirits of navigators below zero, and have given rise to the familiar expression "in the doldrums." The ship lay with a cloud of canvas on her, ready to catch the faintest breath of wind which might chance to ruffle the oily surface of the sea. But from stun-sail boom to main royal there was not an inch of canvas stirred by a breeze. It hung listlessly against the masts, as it had hung for ten days, without the slightest motion. The sun, right overhead, poured down its fiercest heat,—an intense, white, burning, pitiless heat, which, unrelieved by a breath of air, sent all the occupants of the ship to the shelter of any boat, sail, or spar which intercepted the fierce beams. The pitch oozed from the calking in the seams of the deck, the anchors stowed on the fore-castle scorched your hand if you touched them, the paint of the companion blistered and peeled off, and the timbers threat-

ened to open their seams dangerously if this sort of thing continued much longer. So the vessel lay through the long hours of those midsummer days.

Innumerable tiny creatures came forth and sported on the film of sea-weed which covered the surface of the water for leagues and leagues,—weeds of a pale yellow green, that spread as far as the eye could see, and changed the great ocean into a vast prairie. Ten days of calm wrought a change as marvelous as rain does on the burnt-up prairies of the land, causing the surface to spring into a luxuriousness of vegetation whose vast extent seemed to cut off the ship from all intercourse with the world more completely than the water itself.

“Weary work!” exclaimed Sir Arthur Deverell, with a long-drawn sigh, as he lay stretched out on the poop, gazing down between the ridge-ropes and the deck, over the vast expanse of sea-weed-laden water below. “Weary work to one with a light heart,—unendurable to one with a weight of care like mine! Would to heaven we were there, and I could find relief in new scenes, new occupations, and new interests.”

They had experienced some roughish weather in the earlier part of the voyage. A gale of wind off the Western Islands had tested the sea-going powers of the ship. It was her first voyage, and her captain, a smart young sailor of eight-and-twenty, who was part owner as well, was more than pleased with her performance.

He stood leaning out over the taffrail, sheltered from the fierce rays, as Deverell was also, by the awning spread over the poop. Here, grouped about, all more or less prostrate with the intense heat, were various passengers,—Australian merchants, returning from a visit of business or pleasure to the parent country,—young men of birth and position, but with scanty means, going to try their fortunes in the new world,—mothers taking back their children, who had been sent to England for education.—newly-appointed officials,—

and the inevitable young lady going out to be married. There was little in common between them and Deverell. His grief shut him out from communion with his kind. They saw that something lay heavy on his heart, and, with the exception of the few words necessitated by such close intercourse, they seldom interfered with his solitary musings.

These ten days had been terrible to him. They had given him time to think, and in his condition thought was unendurable. Even now in fancy he was back in the old days at Norton, recalling the unclouded happiness of those early days of love, wondering why he had ever been born if he was to endure such misery, and thinking how gladly he would have declined the privilege had Providence thought fit to consult him.

"Stand by to get the light canvas off the ship. Now, my lads, look alive," rang out in a clear voice from the captain, as he suddenly stood erect and turned away from the taffrail.

Deverell sprang to his feet. "Is there a chance of a breeze?" he asked, eagerly, as he advanced towards the captain.

"Something more than a chance. It will be on us before we've got her under snug canvas. Now, swarm up there," he cried to the men who had sprung to the shrouds. "A glass of grog to the first man in the top-gallant yard."

He turned to Deverell. He was a reticent man himself, and had taken rather a fancy to the gloomy passenger who evinced so much interest in the ship and her performances, who was on deck in the roughest weather, and was never in the least degree dismayed by storm and tempest.

"I fancied that bank of cloud would bring it," the captain continued: "I've had my eye on it for the last two hours, only you couldn't quite make it out until the sun got lower. You never know where to look for it next, in this infernal place. We ought to get into the southeast trades in forty-eight



hours, if we could catch anything like a breeze; and we're likely to catch it, and no mistake. Look at that!"

He pointed to a dark line of water far out on the horizon, overshadowed by a pile of gray threatening clouds, from which the cloud-wrack flew off in detached masses and spread in scud over the copper sky.

In ten minutes the ship was made snug under plain sail. The sudden commotion had brought most of the passengers on deck. Deverell stood on the poop, aft, watching eagerly for the wind which, indicated by the approaching black line, came rapidly towards them. The air was perceptibly cooler, but there seemed to be a more intense stillness in it even than before, as if the very atmosphere listened for the coming breeze, for which it had waited so long. Nearer and nearer it came,—so close now that the ripple of the breaking waves could be clearly seen, and that low hiss by which a sailor is made aware of the approaching breeze, even on the darkest nights, could be distinctly heard. It was within a quarter of a mile, and Deverell was calculating how long it would take to reach the ship, when it suddenly seemed to leap the intervening space, and his hair was lifted from his forehead. Then the canvas flew out with a loud thud; the full force of a stiff squall caught the ship on her port beam. She quivered a moment under the sudden shock, heeled slowly over, and went away at the rate of ten knots, dashing the water in crystal spray from her shapely bows.

The captain was rejoiced, and a sensation of relief was experienced by all on board. Presently, with her sails trimmed on the starboard tack, the ship bore up more to the southward. As light as a young fawn over forest pastures, she careered on her way, while the sparkling waves leaped and laughed around her track, as if rejoicing to escape from the monotony of their long sleep.

In another day or two they were well into the southeast

trades, and held a fair course until they reached the parallel of forty degrees south. Here they began to experience some of the stiffer gales of the more southern latitudes. For several days the wind increased. The sea had risen to such an extent that the ship labored heavily, and at length, to their dismay, they found, on sounding the pumps, that there were five feet of water in the hold.

The captain wore an anxious look. Still, however, he indulged in the hope of a cessation of the gale which had been blowing for so many days; nor was he disappointed. As night fell, the wind had so moderated that it was found necessary to get more canvas on the ship, to prevent her rolling her masts out of her. This had hardly been accomplished when one of the strange phenomena of these Southern seas occurred. The wind ceased suddenly, a perfect calm succeeded, and the ship lay helplessly tossing in the tremendous sea, with the cloud of canvas which she now carried flapping in the still air.

So the night closed upon her. The darkness had scarcely settled on the face of the sea, when a sudden peal of thunder broke out from a bank of clouds right in advance of the ship. The lightning played in jagged streaks across the vapory pinnacles,—sharp, angry lightning, which seemed, like the flaming sword of Eden, to threaten death and destruction to all that ventured to come that way. A moment after, a shout from the lookout in the bow echoed above the swirl of the waves, and then a white line of foam was seen advancing almost in a line with the ship's course. Before an order could be issued, the tornado burst upon the devoted vessel, taking her right aback with a suddenness and violence not to be described. There was a crash of shivering wood and parting strands, and the next moment foremast and mainmast came down on deck in a chaos of tangled cordage, rent sails, splintered spars, and stricken seamen, horrible to witness.

Encumbered with the mass of falling rigging, half dragging in the fierce waters, the ship staggered on the crest of the next wave, and plunged into the trough of the sea as if she would go down bodily. At the same moment a mass of water, lifted, as it were, from the surface of the sea by the resistless hurricane, broke clean over her, sweeping her from stem to stern, and rushing down the companion and into the saloon with a fury that carried all before it. Then came a shriek from the women and children, such as dwells in the ear for a lifetime. Some were half drowned where they lay, others were swept against the bulkheads and fell bruised and senseless to the deck. The two boats were borne bodily away from the skids by the resistless flood, and a wild swirl of water swept over to leeward, carrying with it a confused mass of hen-coops, barrels, boxes, broken spars, and struggling men.

With the speed of lightning, the captain seized an axe, and sprang into the main chains, shouting to the crew to follow. A few strong strokes severed the stays; the mass of débris was dragged overboard, and the vessel, with her mizen mast alone standing, plunged on in the midst of the "hell of waters." Before many minutes there was another crash, and the third mast snapped short off. When this like the others had been cut adrift, the ship swung sharp round, broadside to the gale, with the seas making a clean breach over her deck.

There was no more to be done. The captain and officers of the ship, with the one or two passengers who had the hardihood to look the danger in the face, were congregated on the quarter-deck, gaining what shelter they could from the weather bulwark, and clinging to any chance object that afforded them a hold. On the scene within the cabin it is useless to dwell. There could be no sadder sight in this world than the terror-stricken group which was therein assembled,—the child clinging to the mother, the wife to the husband, the sister to the

brother, with the mad howl of the tempest without, death staring them in the face, and the thought of eternal partings, worse than death itself.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE RAFT.

"How long can she keep afloat?" asked Sir Arthur of the captain, with difficulty making himself heard above the fury of the storm.

"Not half an hour, if this holds. There is nothing more to be done: we must meet our fate like men. God help the poor women and children!"

"Amen," echoed the chief officer, who up to this time had been making almost superhuman exertions to better their condition. "We've still the launch left. If the gale breaks, we might hope to save some of them."

"Little chance of that," said the captain, in reply. "The ship hardly lifts to the sea now."

At the end of another half-hour, however, the aspect of things had again changed. There was another lull in the storm, and as the hurricane which had dismasted the ship had come from a direction opposite to the gale of the previous day, the tremendous sea had been to a great extent beaten down, and the waves no longer continued to sweep the deck of the dismasted ship.

A ray of hope returned to the captain's breast, as he became conscious of this change; and without a moment's delay the pumps were manned, and both passengers and crew went to

work with an energy which showed only too well that it was a labor on which their lives depended.

The next morning broke upon them cold and gray. They had worked all through the night, without cessation, and eagerly the captain watched to see if their labors were productive of any result. It was all in vain. The water still gained upon the ship, which continued to plunge heavily into the seas, as if each plunge would be her last.

"There is nothing for it but the launch for the passengers," he said; "but it will scarcely take them: the rest must look to themselves."

It was found, on examination, that the launch had been seriously damaged during the gale, and a considerable time was expended in effecting such repairs as were necessary. Meanwhile, all the available hands turned to, and collected materials for a raft,—their only hope in the absence of another boat. Next, some kegs of water, biscuits, and other provisions were stowed in the launch, and then came the painful task of placing the women and children in her, and providing as many comforts for them as the circumstances would admit.

The terrors and privations of the last forty-eight hours had so broken them down that they seemed powerless to help themselves, or to exert any will of their own. With sad, hopeless faces, they obeyed the instructions given them by the ship's officers. Some would have still clung to the vessel, for there at least was the appearance of safety, but they were told the boat was their only chance of life, so they took their places in silence. Four of the crew, picked men, were told off to take charge of the boat and its occupants, with the chief officer, Mr. Sutton, at the helm.

"There's no time to be lost," said the captain, casting an anxious eye at the heavily-rolling ship: "the sooner you're away the better. Wait with the boat at a short distance from the ship, so that we may keep company when the raft is afloat.

If we should get separated, I know you will do the best you can, Sutton."

The few remaining preparations were then completed, and the boat was shoved off. As she left the ship's side, a gleam of sunshine darted out from between the eastern clouds, and lit up the long undulations of the sea with lines of living gold. It seemed like an omen of hope sent to gladden the hearts of all.

Their only chance now was falling in with a passing vessel. The land was too far off for them to attempt to reach it, even in the calmest weather. If, by a remote chance, they happened to survive the perils and exposure they must needs undergo, the small stock of provisions which they were able to carry would not last out half the distance. A ship, therefore, was their only hope, and, if the weather continued calm, there was a bare possibility that they might see one. Unhappily, it was a region of storms, and the sailors well knew that they could not count on fine weather for more than a few days at a time; but they mercifully kept this knowledge hidden from the helpless creatures under their charge.

In order to keep the ship afloat until the raft was ready, the men had all returned to the pumps. They did not need the captain's word to tell them what to do. Stripped to the waist, they worked in relays, as only men in such desperate straits can work.

Captain Douglas turned from where he had been standing against the gangway, watching the departing boat, and advanced towards the poop. As he did so, Deverell emerged from the saloon.

"Good God, Sir Arthur! why are you here?" exclaimed the captain, aghast. "I thought you were in the boat."

Deverell smiled.

"No, no, Douglas," he answered; "I was not going to diminish the small chance those poor creatures have, by en-

cumbering them with my presence. I take my chance with you."

The captain wrung Deverell's hand silently. It was a noble act of self-denial, which he could well appreciate, and at such a moment he felt it deeply.

"Come with me," he said. "Let us see what chance there is left for us."

They went below, and found the carpenter taking the depth of water in the hold.

"How is it now?" asked the captain.

"Gaining fast," was the calm reply.

"Then there is but one chance for us,—the raft! I wish to heaven, Sir Arthur, you had gone in the boat!—though many a man has been saved from a raft before this. Thank God! the sky is brightening, and there seems a hope of fine weather."

The preparations were soon complete. The raft, formed of stout spars and ship's planking, well lashed and bolted together, was got overboard without difficulty. Then an ample supply of water and provisions was lowered, and lashed fast in the centre. A bundle of blankets, tarpaulins, canvas, an odd spar or two, and some spare line were put on board, together with a compass, quadrant, and a few other articles likely to be of use if the fine weather continued. Then Sir Arthur and the officers and crew went over the stern, where the raft was made fast; and lastly the captain let himself down by the line which hung from the taffrail. The raft was then cut adrift, and they shoved off.

To their great joy, a steady breeze had sprung up from the north and east. Without a moment's delay a spar was rigged up, and a small sail hoisted, which sent them through the water at a fair speed; and, by the help of a large oar, they managed to maintain their course, in company with the boat, which preceded them by about a cable's length. All that

afternoon and through the night the breeze held. The raft was large, and the carpenter had rigged up some planking fore and aft, which to some extent kept off the wash of the sea; so that, huddled together under tarpaulins and well wrapped up, they passed the night in comparative comfort.

The morning broke clear and warm, the breeze still held, and so through three nights and days it continued to waft them steadily onward,—a blessed breeze, which seemed sent by Providence to sustain their hopes in this terrible emergency. The warm nights, the smooth sea, and the fair wind could not fail to raise their hopes of eventual succor, and even to some extent to reconcile them to their position,—so much more endurable than they could have ever anticipated. They were ten in number, but their supply of water and provisions was sufficient to last many days, so they had not much fear on that head. Of tobacco, too, there was a plentiful supply, and, as the long days wore away, many a yarn was spun over a quiet pipe, and even an occasional laugh at some unwonted mishap would break the silence of those southern seas.

Not the least wonderful of the many psychological wonders of man's nature is this marvelous adaptability to circumstances. Who could for a moment imagine that this poor handful of castaway men, floating on a few planks in mid-ocean, uncertain whether the next hour might not wake a tempest which would sweep them into eternity, could indulge in even a passing thought of mirth? And yet the comparative immunity from the dangers of the previous storms, the continued calm weather, and the reviving hope, each day, that some passing vessel would rescue them from future perils, made them quite light of heart, and to some extent oblivious of what they might yet have to encounter.

The fact, too, of their position being so much better than they anticipated went far to sustain them. How often is this the case in all affairs of life! How we fume and fret in an-



ticipation of some impending evil, and, when it comes, how more than endurable we find it! Truly, sorrows, like joys, are more in anticipation than in reality.

---

## CHAPTER XL.

NATHANIEL J. HIGGINBOTTOM.

At last a change came,—a fatal one for the castaways on the raft.

The breeze increased to half a gale. The sea, obedient to its tyrant, again ran high. The boat, whose occupants were too intent on their own preservation to be able to help the raft, was lost sight of. The rain came down in pitiless torrents, so that with the wash of the waves over the unprotected raft, and the deluge from above, the little knot of men were drenched from morning to night. The force of the waves was such that it was as much as they could do to maintain their hold, and the attempt even to get food was attended with so much danger that it was at last relinquished.

The water-casks, and barrels containing the stores, had been lashed fast, or they would long since have been swept away. As it was, they were useless to the wretched men, who, with not a dry thread upon them, cold and half famished, drifted on day after day,—tempted almost to relinquish their hold and let the hungry sea end their unendurable sufferings.

At last came the climax. The constant tossing of the raft had loosened the bolts and lashings of the spars, and they suddenly separated amidships. Water, food, all the carefully-hoarded stores, were swept away, together with half the men, and the wretched group that remained scarcely retained

sufficient consciousness to note what had occurred. A raging thirst had now superseded all other sensations,—a maddening, burning thirst, before which sense and reason fled, until at last they could no longer resist the craving to cool their tongues with the treacherous waters which encircled them on every side. Then followed the inevitable result: shrieks and moans of absolute madness rang far out over the now silent sea. Some threw themselves into the waves, unable to endure their intolerable sufferings; and so another night came down, and life itself seemed gone from the only two who now lay motionless upon the shattered remnant of the raft.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nathaniel J. Higginbottom, of the American clipper-ship *Catawampus*, was a happy man. He was the captain of the fastest full-rigged ship that ever sailed out of Baltimore harbor.

He had a wager of five hundred dollars that he would bring his ship to Shanghai three days sooner than Captain Zechariah P. Sloman, of the *Raccoon*, which had left the harbor an hour before the *Catawampus*; and the latter had slipped across the line, and into the southeast trades, at a speed which must have left all competitors far astern. Therefore Nathaniel J. Higginbottom was a happy man, and he looked it; furthermore, he was a proud man, and he looked that too.

And in truth there was something to be proud of in the ship of which he was, for the time, the sole lord and master. As the first beams of the morning sun, striking with level rays across the fresh blue sea, caught the cloud of canvas which bore her swiftly along, the world could hardly show a fairer sight. From courses to royals her canvas glowed with the tint of the rose. The leaping waves flew off in two graceful curves of foam from her prow, and left a long silvery pathway on the surface of the sea far behind. Close-hauled, and standing within six points of the wind, she headed east-south-

east, and was going through the water at the rate of ten knots.

"Chaw me up to pumpkin-squash and whittle my legs to walking-sticks if this ain't fine!" exclaimed the captain, as he let his eye dwell for a moment on the sails as flat as boards, and saw by the lifting of the leeches how close to the wind she steered. "I guess this here child will show Zechariah P. Sloman a clear course to Shanghai, as slick as grease on a nigger's back, instead of knocking about on the line like a blue-tailed fly in a sugar-store,—as I guess Zechariah's now a doing; the 'tarnal critter's showing him her heels, like a Britisher at Bunker's Hill. Yes, *sir*!"

The last words were addressed to the mate, who stood by the captain's side, rejoicing like the latter in their rapid progress, but with a less demonstrative manner. He was a thorough sailor. He had not achieved the brilliant renown of his captain, who had accomplished some of the most rapid voyages on record, but he was a safe man in a ship, and one upon whom the captain thoroughly relied.

"The wind's freshening," he replied. "It's coming on to blow hard. She'd be snugger under less canvas."

"Chop me up to pemmican and throw my bones to grisly bars if I take a rag off her; no, not if it blows Jonah out of the whale's belly, or the tail off a darned brass monkey. Stand it she kin, and stand it she must, or bust up like a Mississippi biler with the skipper settin' on the safety-valve. Some."

And stand it she did for the greater part of that day, until even the captain was astonished at the speed with which she went through the water. The waves churned their white lips in anger as she plowed them rapidly aside and sped onward as if in defiance of any forces they could bring against her. The officers and crew, proud of their vessel, regarded her performance with elated bosoms, and seemed almost ready to applaud them as they would those of a sentient being.

A group of the younger ship's officers were congregated in the half-deck late in the afternoon, making merry over their cigars and grog. The swift dash and swirl of the waves along the vessel's side, the sudden smack of a sea upon her weather-bow, the rattling shower of spray that sped like hail across her deck, were so much merry music in their ears, and jest succeeded jest, until the cabin rang with peals of uncontrollable laughter.

At last there were calls for a song.

"Come, Fisher, do you feel like singing?" was the cry.

"Guess I do. What'll you have, boys? a rattling sea-song, or a love-ditty?"

"A sea-song! a sea-song!" was the cry.

"Then I guess I know the one that will fix you. Do you know the Rover's song?"

"No. Go ahead slick, Fisher, or we shall sight Shanghai before you've begun."

Fisher threw himself back on his locker, and gave out the song in a rich baritone voice.

#### "THE ROVER'S SONG.

"Day after day we held our way,  
A hardy crew that faltered never.  
The fierce sea, beating into spray,  
Sang to the whistling winds forever.

"The sea-bird hung above the brine,  
Or dipped and wheeled and circled over  
The bending mast, the straining line,  
As onward flew our fleet Sea-Rover.

"We sighted her at set of sun,—  
A goodly ship with bullion freighted.  
Her skipper laughed: 'A gallant run,'  
He cried, with thoughts of home elated.

"Eight bells had struck; our swords were true,  
Our hearts deep set on death and plunder;  
A shot from out our port bow flew,  
And cut her mizen-shroud asunder.

"A crash,—her mast went by the board;  
At once we drew beneath her quarter,  
And up the side, a fearless horde,  
We swarmed, 'mid fire and sword and slaughter.

"A blood-red deck, a pallid moon,  
A sheen of swords, revolvers flashing,  
And, through that sultry night of June,  
A sound of spars and timbers crashing.

"Uprose the sun; still onward sped,  
O'er the blue sea, our gallant clipper.  
The other deep in ocean's bed  
Lay with her white-faced crew and skipper.

"Our captain laughed, our captain quaffed;  
'Ho, ho!' he cried, 'that counts for seven.  
Drink, messmates, drink a deeper draught:  
We've sent a hundred souls to heaven!'"

A sudden crash overhead, which seemed the realization of the song, cut short the applause which had burst forth as the singer concluded. All started to their feet.

"All hands on deck! Tumble up, there,—quick!" shouted a voice above.

In an instant the cabin was vacated, and every one sought the deck, to know the cause of the sudden commotion.

The alternative of the captain—"Stand it she must, or bust"—seemed partly realized. The strain upon the upper spars with the increasing wind was more than they could bear; and the fore-top-gallant-mast had snapped short off, bringing down the sails and rigging in a confused mass about the ship's side.

"Just what I was afraid of," said the cautious mate.

"Rot!" shouted the captain, in reply. "Now, my lads, swarm up, and clear away that eternal lumber, before a one-eyed 'possum can wink!"

The order was obeyed in a twinkling, and the men hurried into the tops. Suddenly a voice from the fore-mast head was heard calling,—

"On deck there!"

"What is it?" answered the mate, making himself heard as well as he could above the sound of the flapping sails.

"Something floating about a mile away, on the port bow. We can't quite make out what."

The captain and mate sprang on to the round-house. The former leveled his glass, and looked in the direction indicated by the man in the top. At first he could make out nothing; but presently, rising on the crest of a wave, he saw what appeared to be two men, floating on some spars. He was a good-natured man at heart, but his soul was in his ship, and anything that delayed her course was an aggravation and an offense to him. The mishap to the upper spar had annoyed him; and a second cause of detention, even coming in this shape, he considered a personal insult.

"Tan my hide into Mogadore kip," he cried, "if there ain't another tarnation delay for the Catawampus! How many more darned catastrophies are we to have? Don't stand staring there, like a blue-nosed monkey in a bird-cage! Haul up the fore-courses, starboard your helm, and let's get along-side the critters if we can."

The order was obeyed; the ship stood away in the direction of the floating object. When she was within a cable's length the captain's voice was again heard:

"Haul in the port braces, and back the main-yard; starboard, steady, so!" he cried.

With a majestic sweep the ship came up into the wind. The main-topsail lay flat against the mast, while the rest of

the canvas fluttered like the wings of a sea-bird settling to rest after a long flight. As lightly as her feathered prototype, the ship lay breasting the waves, which now came rolling on in a direct line with her bows.

In a few minutes a boat was hooked on to the davits and swung overboard. Four stout hands, a coxswain, and a man at the bow, got into her, and were quickly lowered. It was ticklish work, for the sea ran high; but they cast off just as the boat lifted on a wave, and got away all clear. Then they pulled stoutly in the direction of the floating object, the mate giving them the required course from the bow.

After they had rowed for about five minutes, they came close upon the object of which they were in search. They found it to be part of a raft, with two men lashed thereon. Whether or not there was life in the men, they could not make out. They were shrunk to mere skeletons; their faces were gaunt and colorless; their bones seemed protruding through their skin; and the sea was, at intervals, making a clean breach over them.

The men in the boat—stout hearty fellows, with bronzed cheeks, and muscles like a four-strand cable—looked on in horror.

"The critters are pretty considerably chawed up, I guess," said the coxswain. "What's to be done?"

"Gone 'coons, I calculate: we kin do nothing for them."

"It's as well to see whether the critters are alive or dead," said another.

How to set about it was the difficulty. The sea was too high to lay alongside the raft, but American pluck, however, was not to be defeated. The men watched their opportunity, and, in one of those comparative lulls which come in the roughest seas, ranged quickly up to within a few feet of the raft. At the self-same moment the man in the bows of the boat sprang lightly on to the raft, with the end of a spare

line in his hand, then the boat sheered off again to a safe distance.

The seaman bent down over the nearest man. As he did so, he saw the open eyes were fixed upon him, and there was a slight movement of the hand. It was the gallant Douglas, who, with Sir Arthur, alone remained on the raft. The sailor sent a shout to his messmates in the boats.

"One on 'em alive, anyway," he cried. "Stand by to haul him aboard, while I pass the line round him."

He passed the rope under Douglas's arms with a running bow-line, then cut the lashings and dropped him gently into the sea. At the same moment the other men hauled rapidly in, and in five seconds Douglas was lying safely at the bottom of the boat. The man on the raft now approached Sir Arthur, who lay white and motionless.

"Dead as a riddled 'coon, I guess," the man exclaimed. "Howsomdever, we'll sarve him the same. Heave back the line," he shouted: "tain't much use, but we kin complete the job, now we're here."

The line was coiled and sent flying back to the raft. The same process was repeated, and Sir Arthur lay beside Douglas in the bottom of the boat.

Then the boat came up again as near as it could venture. It was too far, however, for a spring, but after one or two attempts it ranged close alongside for an instant, and the man on the raft tumbled in. Then the men pulled for the ship, which was now half a mile away.

While they had been absent, the broken spar had been partly cleared, and the ship was dodging easily up to the wind, with her topsail still backed, waiting for them to come up. They ranged up under the lee gangway, where the captain was standing.

Real anger flashed from Nathaniel J. Higginbottom's eyes when he saw the state of the case.



"You infernal villains! you don't mean to tell me you've wasted all this time in picking up two dead men? Rot me if I don't wish I'd left you to keep 'em company. If I hadn't been such a darned soft-livered cuss, I should, too."

"One on 'em alive, anyway, captain," replied the coxswain.

At this the skipper appeared somewhat mollified. A dozen stout hands were ready to hoist the sufferers on board, and in five minutes they were snugly stowed in warm dry berths, and so tended by kindly hands (with the captain foremost in those Christian offices) that in less than an hour after their rescue it was reported that there was life and vigor in both of them, and strong hopes of their ultimate recovery.

When the sun went down that night, the Catawampus, under snug canvas, was going away eastward with a speed which satisfied even the heart of Nathaniel J. Higginbottom.

---

## CHAPTER XLI.

### A GLIMPSE OF HOME.

"THE very image of his father," said the nurse.

"That's more than he deserves, then," responded Susan, implying thereby that the unconscious infant referred to had intentionally bestowed a distinct favor on its progenitor by allowing itself to be cast in the same mould. "A wicked good-for-nothing man," she continued, "leaving a wife that he could no more be compared to, than sugar-candy to a rhubarb pill. I wonder where he is now? Murdered by bush-rangers by this time, perhaps; and if it wasn't for missus, I should say serve him right, too. Never to send a line home

to let us know whether he's alive or dead! Ugh! I've no patience with him! Have I, my pretty? Bless your little innocent duck of a face! I wish you was more like your dear mother, I do."

If the remarkably pink representative of the house of Deverell, who lay staring at the ceiling with wide unconscious eyes, could have comprehended the scene around, he must have thought his lines had been cast in very pleasant places. But those eyes had made acquaintance with the daylight only three weeks before, and were now just beginning to receive a dim impression of outward objects. He lay in a bassinette, profusely decorated with lace and satin bows, indications of a mother's loving care, which, in the human, lines the fledgling's nest with down and fine linen, and in the bird, with moss and wool. In forty years' time, perhaps, or something more, when the human fledgling looks upon the dear face for the last time, and closes forever the eyes that first welcomed his own to light, he learns to appreciate what that love has really been, and weeps unavailing tears beside an irrevocable grave.

The sunlight was coming in through the open window, and round the window outside, roses, full-bosomed and fragrant, were pressing against the frame-work in a crowd, as if eager to gaze upon the rounded bud within, who wore their own tint and bade fair to rival them in the soft crimson of his lips and cheeks. Looking in a straight line from the bassinette, there was nothing but pure blue sky as a background to the flowers, and that blue vault was resonant with the songs of birds, which seemed to flood it like the sunlight, and the fragrance from the sunlit flowers. From a higher point of view, however, the eye wandered over a wealth of undulating lawn and flowers, to some velvety meads running up to gray rocks which skirted the sea, and between these rocks, glimpses of a sapphire bay with a fringe of amber sea-weed might be

seen stretching away for miles to a headland and a far-off light-house, which looked down upon the Channel track, and turned a dazzling eye upon the passing ships, through the dim watches of the night.

The scene was exquisite, and the house which looked upon it was wonderfully in harmony with the spot. It had a low, thick roof of thatch, studded with hidden nests of robin, wren, and sparrow, from which, however, the young ones had long since departed; for it was now September, and the rich Virginia creeper, twining about the rustic veranda which surrounded the house on three sides, was beginning to put on its gaudy autumn robe of scarlet slashed with gold. The windows opened on to the veranda, and were so festooned with creepers that the existence of a frame-work was a matter of faith, and the chintz curtains were sadly at a discount.

\* To this pretty cottage on the Devonshire coast Lady Deverell had come, when the event but half suspected at the time of her husband's departure was no longer a matter of doubt. It was a spot well known to her in her younger days; not far, indeed, from her native place, and full of associations with her early years of happiness and love. The recollections awakened by a return to this neighborhood were, in her present condition, terribly painful; but there was at the same time a negative happiness in revisiting scenes so inexpressibly dear to her, for she still hoped, in spite of her present sorrow, that in some far-off future she might yet regain the happiness she had lost.

Another motive also had brought her hither,—the thought that she would soon become a mother. Her husband, she remembered, had often said that should a child at any time be born to him it was his earnest wish that it should draw its first breath in that well-beloved county where his ancestors for years and years had lived and died. She could not forget this, and, hearing that the cottage was to let, had

taken it for a term which would carry her over the birth of her child.

When that event happened, her friend Mrs. Poingdestre had hastened from town, and had been like a ministering angel to her through her sadness and solitude. The little bright-eyed boy, "so dreadfully like its father," as Susan considered, had come as an inestimable treasure to her; but it set up at the same time an increased yearning in the mother's heart for the return of that father, and filled her heart with almost unendurable sorrow.

There are few sorrows in life, however deep, which do not bring with them some unforeseen source of consolation. The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb; the dock-leaf grows by the nettle, the birthwort in the haunt of the cobra. But for her unparalleled trial, Lady Deverell could never have known the value of a friend like Mrs. Poingdestre. She came to her in her great sorrow, with a depth of sympathy, and an abnegation of self, quite remarkable in one usually so reserved. Blanche Boyd was too much engrossed with her husband's pursuits, which kept him continually engaged, to be able to give much time to her sorely stricken friend, however much she may have desired it; but Mrs. Poingdestre and Val were free to devote themselves to her unremittingly, and it was their greatest pleasure to do so.

The affair at the club had, of course, flown all over London within a few hours. Irreproachable women, who had never known a sorrow or a temptation,—women as chaste as ice, and as cold, to whom virtue came as an inheritance, and fitted them as easily as a velvet robe,—shrugged their white shoulders when they heard it, and exclaimed, "How dreadful!" and, almost unconsciously to themselves, derived a pleasure from the thought of their own undeviating rectitude, while others could fall so low. Male friends of the Deverells said, "Good God! why didn't she come to us,

before she did such a dreadful thing? Been only too glad to help her." They forgot that it is only after the desperate deed has been done—the suicide, the murder, or what not—that people are aroused to the full consciousness of the extremity, and that if they are told beforehand that such a catastrophe is imminent, they think it an idle threat, and button up their pockets.

Thank God, the world has a few Samaritans more far-sighted!

Mrs. Poingdestre had taken the deserted wife away from the house where the terrible parting scene had been enacted, and had carried her off to their place in the country. Deverell had written once to his old friend, merely to announce his departure for Australia the following day, but without even naming the ship in which he was to sail. Val was not to be beaten. He started at once for Liverpool, and without much difficulty discovered all he wanted to know. It would be some satisfaction, at least, to watch for tidings of the vessel and to hear of her safe arrival.

The weeks and months passed on, however, and they heard no more. It was time that tidings came of her arrival in Australia, but still they were kept in suspense. They strove in every way to comfort the wife, and made her believe, long after the time had passed, that the mail was not yet due, and that in a short time longer she would be sure to hear. Then came the event which compelled her removal to Devonshire, whither Mrs. Poingdestre accompanied her. Val had remained in town, still anxiously waiting for tidings. He had felt that he would only be in the way at the cottage, and he had business to attend to; but he was now daily expected.

Lady Deverell was sitting, propped up by pillows, under the pretty veranda, with her constant friend by her side. The low hum of bees was all around, and a murmur, came up between the rocks from the sea, as it circled in ceaseless wavelets over

the white pebbles on the beach below. If calm weather and a lovely scene could ever soothe the restless heart, they would have done so now; but grief defies nature, and turns the brightest day to darkest night, the flowering fields to Hades, the sunshine to a mockery and a snare.

She was all weakness now. When her husband attacked her, she had defended herself bravely, and, in her conscious rectitude, had defied his insinuations. But he was *with her* then, and she could not realize what her thoughts would be when he had departed forever. She felt now that she could grovel at his feet to bring him back. Her love was infinite. Life was not life to her without him, but a living death, and she could not shake off the ever-present gloom that oppressed her.

Suddenly, in the midst of their conversation, the sound of wheels was heard in the drive, round the angle of the house.

"Dearest Val, I verily believe!" cried Mrs. Poingdestre, running round the veranda.

Two minutes after she returned with her husband.

Lady Deverell put up a poor little withered hand, and a smile of real happiness lit up her face, as she welcomed the friend who had stood by her so nobly in her sorrow. Val thought he had never seen her look more beautiful.

"And how is the matchless infant?" he asked, after a few words of greeting had been exchanged.

"Perfectly well, and the picture of health," Lady Deverell answered. "I have promised Susan she shall be the first to exhibit his charms to you, though I fear nurse will be terribly jealous. It is robbing her of her prerogatives. By the way," she added, "I have a request to make, which I hope you will not refuse. Dear little baby is to be christened next week, and I want you to be his godfather."

"Nothing I should like better," said Val. "I'll take him

under my special protection, and train him up in the way he should go,—that is, straight.”

“I can’t tell you how happy you make me,” replied Lady Deverell; and with that her eyes filled with tears, though she strove hard to hide them.

Val broke into some pleasant banter, but, in spite of his light tone, there was something in his voice which made his wife look at him anxiously. She had not noticed it before, in the joy of meeting, but his face was quite worn and dejected, and, with a wife’s intuition, she felt that some calamity had happened.

“Let us go and see baby at once,” she said. “It will be getting dark soon. You won’t mind our leaving you for a few minutes, dear?” she said.

“Oh, no!”

Husband and wife passed into the drawing-room. When they were out of hearing, Mrs. Poingdestre stopped.

“What is it, Val,” she asked, laying her hand on her husband’s arm.

“Something too dreadful. I’m almost afraid to tell you. It will kill *her*.”

“Surely he is not dead?”

“Yes.”

“God help her!” cried Mrs. Poingdestre, sinking on to a seat.

She burst into tears,—a thing that her husband had never seen her do before. He put his strong arm about her, and led her to a room farther away. She looked up at him for more information. He drew a letter from his pocket. It was from the ship-brokers who had chartered the *Flying Cloud*, and ran as follows:

“In answer to your inquiries, we regret to inform you that we have this day received information which confirms the fears we have long entertained with regard to the *Flying*

Cloud. A letter from Mr. Sutton, the chief officer, dated from New Zealand, informs us that the ship was caught in a severe gale in latitude 40° south, and had to be abandoned in a sinking condition. Mr. Sutton and fourteen others, chiefly passengers, contrived to get away in a boat, and were, after much suffering, picked up by a vessel bound for New Zealand. The captain and crew had saved themselves upon a raft, with which the boat kept company for some days, but, rough weather coming on, they could no longer keep together, and when the raft was last seen it was breaking up. We regret to add that Sir Arthur Deverell was not in the boat, but when last seen was on a mere fragment of the raft, so that there is no possibility of his having been saved. The captain also perished with him."

Mrs. Poingdestre sat motionless as she finished reading this. She was so white that her husband was seriously alarmed. He sat down beside her.

"It would have been a mercy if God had taken her," she said, at length.

"I have thought so ever since. You may imagine what a journey I have had, with this horrible thing on my mind."

"We must not tell her now. As you say, it would kill her."

"I have quite resolved not to do so. When she is stronger, and has learned to rely on the blessing that has been sent her in her child, she will be able to bear it better. Meanwhile, for heaven's sake, see that no newspapers enter the house, or we shall be morally guilty of murder."



## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE REEF.

THE evil fate which followed Deverell ever since his departure from home still dogged his footsteps with relentless pertinacity. Poor Higginbottom was never destined to pocket his five hundred dollars. His voyage was but another exemplification of the old proverb, "The more haste, the less speed." The Catawampus, it is true, had slipped through the Straits of Sunda, and into the China Seas, in an incredibly short space of time; but here a catastrophe occurred which well-nigh bereft Higginbottom of his senses, and left him a sadder man for the remainder of his life. Deverell and Captain Douglas had in vain entreated him to deviate from his course, for the purpose of landing them at some port whence they would have a chance of getting a ship for Australia. But little time would have been lost in bearing up for Singapore, where Douglas had friends. Higginbottom was, however, inexorable.

"Why, you tarnation discontented coons," he exclaimed, "I saved your darned carcasses from a watery grave, and yet you ain't satisfied. What more would you have? If you liked your former berth better, get the carpenter to rig you up a spare spar or two, and we'll drop you overboard, with a biscuit and a bottle of rum between you, wherever you think the sea nicest. Choose your own time and place, and you'll find yourselves a pretty considerable long way astarn in a brace of shakes. But my advice to you is to stick to the ship. As for the Catawampus, she can't go out of her course nohow: that's flat. She'll go slick ahead now, with the south-

east monsoon, like a red-hot knife through a pound of butter. Yes, sir."

Soon afterwards the ship entered the Straits of Banca. Anxious to gain time in every way, Higginbottom left the usual track, and took a shorter cut through a channel abounding in dangerous reefs. He knew, if the wind held, that, with constant watchfulness, which he did not grudge, he could steer his course in safety, and thus save many hours. The wind, however, which had been blowing steadily from the south, as it does for six months at a stretch in this region, suddenly fell light. There was a dangerous reef of rocks laid down in the chart, to the westward of their course. Mindful of the treacherous currents which abound in these seas, they had given it a wide berth, and, with what wind they held, stood well away from it for twelve hours. Towards evening the wind dropped almost to a dead calm. The night was fine, but as dark as pitch. They had no cause for fear, however, for the sea was smooth, and they had reason to anticipate that the breeze would spring up again in a few hours. Nevertheless, to make all sure, the captain took another precaution.

"Heave the lead," he said to the officer of the watch, "and see whether there's any current."

"One hand into the chains," the officer cried, in obedience to the order. "Heave the lead."

A man sprang to the chains immediately, and did as he was directed. The line went straight down by the ship's side. Had there been any current, it would have gone down at an angle.

Quite satisfied, the captain went below. "Call me if the wind springs up," he said, as he turned in to his cabin.

Two hours later, his impatience to get on rendering him unable to sleep, he was on deck again. He stretched himself as he approached the side where the mate was standing.

"The darned wind ain't overtook us yet, then?" he said.

"No," replied the other; "not a capful since you went below." Then he added, "If we hadn't stood away from that reef for twelve hours, I should say it was under our quarter. There's a reflection exactly like the reef."

The captain sprang on to the round house. At that moment a pang shot through his heart such as he had never in all his life known before, and was never likely to know again.

"Good God! It *is* the reef!"

He dropped on to the deck again like a man who has received a mortal wound, but he took the only course open to him.

"Clear the bower anchor," he cried, in a voice of thunder.

The men sprang to the fore-castle. In two minutes the order was obeyed.

"Let go."

It was too late. As the words issued from the captain's lips, there was a shock which seemed to rend the ship from stem to stern; in two seconds there was another, then a slighter one, and the Catawampus was over the reef, settling down into deep water with a hole in her bottom, through which the water was rushing as it rushes through the sluice of a lock.

For a moment every soul on board stood aghast. Then all was wild confusion, and *saue qui peut* was the only plan of action. There was a rush at the boats, and one was got over-board in an incredibly short space of time. She was filled in an instant,—dangerously full,—but there was no time to pause, and the men pulled away to be out of the swirl of the sinking ship, which they knew was imminent. Two other boats were lowered, and among those who found a place was Deverell. The boat he was in held on a moment for the captain to come in, and that moment was fatal. The ship suddenly dropped her bows under water, like a swimmer taking

a dive. Then she slid beneath the green waves as a man slips on an ice-slope; her main yard-arm caught the boat amidships, cutting it in two, and dragging its occupants down in a fearful vortex, wherein oars, spars, casks, cordage, and maimed and struggling men were whirled together in one awful mass, as the ship settled down to her last resting-place in twenty fathoms of water.

Deverell was a good swimmer. He had been unhurt by the yard, but the sudden shock confused him. As soon as he could collect his thoughts, he struck upward. A recoiling eddy helped him, and in a few seconds he was at the surface. Then he became conscious that he must have come in contact with some sharp object below the surface, for his temple was bleeding, and he felt weak and dizzy. He struck out wildly. He knew there was nothing to be hoped from the boat which got away, as it was overcrowded, and the men would not be likely to sacrifice themselves for the sake of picking up one or two more. He had only himself to depend on. He gazed into the pitchy darkness for something to lay hold of. He struck out again. This time his hand came suddenly against an object floating on the surface. It was a large hen-coop, buoyant enough to support his weight in the water. He threw himself across it, and thrust his arm through an opening in the part which was uppermost. Then he felt his senses flowing away from him, and remembered no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

An island, not half a mile in circumference, built up by myriads of tiny creatures working in the depths of the sea,—creatures with the simplest organisms, yet gifted with an instinct which so guides them in the construction of their wondrous erections that they fail not to leave a passage for the tide to ebb and flow within; an island with a fringe of palms spreading merciful shade upon the strips of burning sand; with nothing of life around, save the giant crustacea, which

dodged in and out among the streaks of brown sea-weed, which lifted idly in the soft ocean swell upon the shore, and a handful of shipwrecked men, who gazed with eager eyes across the pitiless expanse of water which seemed to shut them out from life and hope.

A few of those who had been in the boat which was cut in two by the sinking ship had drifted on to this island, which happily was near at hand.

In the darkness and confusion the other boats, terribly overladen, had got away, steering for the nearest mainland. The only hope of those who were left was in some passing vessel; but there was an equal dread of the inhuman cut-throats with which these seas are infested, so that what their fate might be, from day to day, not one of them could venture to predict.

How they had lived God only knows! Some few things had drifted on to the island from the sinking ship, among them a cask of water, which had served them for a short time. Rain had happily come to their relief; a barrel of biscuit had drifted on to the sand; they had lived on crabs, limpets, anything they could pick up on the shore, and so eked out a wretched existence for more than a month.

A strange fate this for the proud Deverell! More and more he began to trace in it the Fingers of a Hand which pointed out to him the folly of his past life,—the absurdity of that pride of race which, when he left his devoted wife, seemed to possess him soul and body,—which seemed so childish to him now, a miserable castaway on a deserted island, subsisting on food from which his dogs would have turned away in the days gone by, and creeping like the lowest beast into any chance hole or corner for warmth and shelter at night. If only she could see him now,—the wife whom in his madness he had deserted so cruelly,—how would she wind her dear arms about him, hold him to her bosom, and shower loving kisses upon

his worn sad face! The thought of what he had sacrificed was agony to him; the thought of what she must be suffering came upon him with a force which he had never felt till now. Remorse, deep and lasting, settled upon his heart. He felt he would gladly have died if he could for one brief instant have held his wife to his heart and implored her forgiveness for the cruel wrong he had done her.

At times he had thought it would have been better to die at once than to endure what he had endured,—the bodily suffering he had undergone, the mental anguish, keener far than the mere physical trials. And yet in his calmer moments he did not wish to die, hopeless as his present wretched existence seemed. Through it all there was a dim dream of happiness in some far-off future time, which he hardly dared to dwell on. It is a fallacious thought, that desire for death, in which we sometimes indulge when trouble comes upon us with a weight which seems to overbalance our reason; but when Death, to whom we have looked for succor, really stares us in the face, we flee from him as from a ghastly spectre.

“This life whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.”

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

A ship was beating to the southward against the summer monsoon, and had made what sailors call a long leg in towards the little island whereon Deverell and his companions dragged out a miserable existence. They were watching from the highest point, as they had watched day and night for so many weary weeks; but they were looking in the direction opposite to that from which the ship approached, as in that direction they thought their best chance of succor lay. Deverell was sitting somewhat apart from the rest, leaning a

gaunt cheek upon his hand, and gazing, with wide, woful eyes, across the watery waste.

Suddenly a sound caught his ear, a familiar sound, but low and indistinct, as if coming from a great distance. It was the flutter of heavy canvas.

He turned his head; then he sprang to his feet in a kind of frenzy, and waved his arms wildly aloft.

The ship had just come up to the wind. She filled, and fell away on the other tack, leaving the island at the rate of ten knots.

Despair seized upon the unhappy men, for their signal—an old coat, fastened to the end of a broken spar—had not been seen amid the tall palms, though placed in the most conspicuous position in which they could secure it. Tearing it from its lashings, they dragged it to the beach, waving it aloft, and shouting and screaming as only men in such an extremity can.

A terrible five minutes passed. Hope died within them. Then a wild cry of delight broke from the group.

“Oh, God be thanked! Oh, God be thanked!”

The ship came suddenly up to the wind a second time, and a boat was dropped from her quarter.

Half an hour after, Deverell and his companions were hauled on board the British ship *Chanticleer*, bound from Hong Kong to Melbourne.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

ARTHUR DEVERELL, JUNIOR.

"KITCHEE, kitchee, kitchee! Oh, zoo pretty itty dear! Lor', my lady, how lovely he does look, with his cheeks as round as peaches, and his eyes like a couple of blackberries! I'm sure he as good as talks, though he is only three months old. Was oo saying mamma wouldn't come and talk to oo, a dear? Do put away your letters, my lady. You're wearing your heart out with crying. What's the good of thinking so much about what's past and gone?"

Susan and her mistress were in the old drawing-room at Chiswick, whither Lady Deverell had compelled herself to return after she had, to a certain extent, recovered from the fearful shock consequent on the news of her husband's death. In spite of the intensely sad recollections which the return awakened, she could not help feeling that he was associated with the spot. It therefore became hallowed ground to her, and the thought of its being possessed by strangers was utterly repugnant to her feelings.

She was seated at a writing-table, turning over old letters, —relics of early days of happiness, mute voices of the dead come back, like the burden of a well-remembered song. They filled her with ineffable sadness; but her husband did not seem so utterly lost to her while she could dwell on his very words and touch the paper which his hand had touched ere-while, ay, and, in her more solitary moments, press to her lips the letters of the name, knowing that his hand had lingered there as he signed it, and that his heart was with her in every



word he wrote. "What was the good of thinking so much of the past?" In spite of her sorrow, she almost smiled as she heard the question. The past was everything to her, the future a blank,—a dark, unexplored vista, which she did not care to face.

"It is impossible to forget it, Susan," she answered. "If I had had more faith, and not been guilty of an act which drove him away——"

"He wouldn't have been alive any more then than he is now," interrupted Susan, with unconcealed impatience. "You know that as well as I do, my lady. You saved his life twice, but you couldn't go on saving it every month; and if he was determined to kill himself, how can you be to blame? You did your best, and nobody could do more. This was always my consolation when I lived among the blacks and the beetles. However much the first-floor might grumble, and it's the nature of first-floors to grumble, I used to say to myself, 'Susan, you've done your best, and the Pope of Rome couldn't do more.' Then, if missus was out, I'd let 'em ring till they broke the bell-ropes, and never took no notice, for my conscience was easy. Wasn't it, my pretty itty pet? Do come and look at him, my lady."

As Susan finished her disquisition, she bent down more closely over the bassinette by which she had been kneeling during the foregoing dialogue. Suddenly her face lighted up, as if she had made an important discovery.

"There! I was sure of it," she exclaimed, holding back the baby's rounded, rosy lips with her forefinger. "He's actually got a tooth coming through."

The most obdurate mother's heart could not hold out against an announcement of this kind. Lady Deverell rose from her chair, and advanced to the bassinette. Her heart thrilled as she looked on the little face before her and beheld therein the growing likeness to one who was lost to her for-

ever. A mother's curiosity, however, diverted her sad thoughts, and she knelt beside Susan to join her in the inspection of the tiny infant mouth. As she did so, a double knock was heard at the hall-door. Lady Deverell rose hurriedly.

"Who can that be, Susan?" she said. "Go and see. Say that I am not at home to any one, unless it is Mrs. Poingdestre or Mrs. Boyd."

In spite of the kindness and sympathy she had met with on every side, she still shrank from all intercourse with the outer world; and no entreaties on the part of Susan or her more intimate friends could move her on this point.

"Lor', my lady, it would do you a world of good if you'd only see a little company now and then," urged Susan.

"Do as I tell you, Susan," was the rejoinder. She acted on the faithful Susan's advice, nevertheless, and, gathering her papers together, was about to leave the room, when she again paused for a moment by the bassinette and contemplated the placid little face which lay beneath her gaze. Then all the trouble of her heart broke forth, and she knelt and kissed the tiny lips, while a tear fell from her eyes and trickled down on to the baby's rounded cheeks, where it lay like a dew-drop on a rose.

"My little darling, my poor little orphan boy!" she exclaimed. "How my heart aches to think that *he* can never see the tiny face he would have loved so well! Had he seen it I might even have gained his forgiveness!"

The sound of approaching footsteps caused her to hurry from the room. She had scarcely done so when Susan reappeared, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Boyd. Blanche was as bright and sparkling and happy as she had ever been; as if the world, for her, were without a cloud, and the air of daily life redolent with the perfume of roses.

"Well, Susan," she began, in her cheery voice, "and how is the peerless infant this morning?"

"Quite well, thank you, ma'am. He's asleep. I thought her ladyship was here," Susan added. "I will look for her, ma'am, if you will be kind enough to take a seat."

Blanche took her station by the cradle instead, and gazed in admiration at the little form nestling within.

"Clement, do look here," she said. "Isn't he lovely? You must paint me a picture of him immediately."

"Half payment after the first sitting, mind. That's the regular rule."

"Don't be grasping, sir. Prosperity is making you penurious."

"I shall be *driven* to penury if you make me fritter away so much valuable time in shopping and paying visits."

Blanche dropped herself into an easy-chair, with her pretty lips protruded in a very decided pout.

"Fritter away time, indeed!" she echoed. "How dreadfully unkind of you, Clement! You wouldn't have said that before we were married."

"No, dear, because then I had to win you. Now I want to keep you. What, tears?" he exclaimed, putting his arm about her and kissing her. "Why, Blanche, I didn't mean really to hurt you."

Blanche jumped up with a happy smile and a laugh. "Why, you dear old goose!" she exclaimed. "I was only pretending. It's so nice to have one's tears kissed away, you know. They were only tears of joy, after all."

"You little deceiver; but I won't be taken in again," Boyd exclaimed. "Well, I must really be off!" he added; "there's Alderman Brown waiting to sit all this time."

"Well, it won't hurt him. Besides, he'll think you have been detained at the Palace. That will be a fine story for him to tell. I fancy I can hear him now, with his pompous voice. 'Sitting to Boyd, you know. Great favorite at court, Boyd. Detained at the Palace. Had to wait half the morning for

him,—very provoking,—but he tells me the princess is so charming !” People always like to know a little about royalty at first hand : it reflects a sort of royalty on themselves, you know.”

“ Yes, but time is money to city men, and people go in for cheap royalty nowadays.”

“ The brutes,” Blanche said, tapping the point of her little foot impatiently on the ground. “ When we have a good queen, for goodness’ sake don’t let us be niggardly with her. I hate the people who would pry into everything she spends, from the price of an ermine robe to a pennyworth of milk.”

“ I quite agree with you ; and if they only knew how it makes us hate republicanism, they would alter their tactics. Good-by, dear. If I’ve finished in time, I’ll come and meet you.”

Boyd left the room. His wife continued sitting in her easy-chair, looking straight before her into a large console glass, which hung opposite, and reflected the most plump and perfect personification of female happiness which it is possible to conceive. She sat gazing a long time, as if revolving many thoughts in her mind. At last she drew a long sigh, and gave the thoughts utterance.

“ Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! I *am* so happy ! What have you done, madam,” she added, apostrophizing the form in front of her, “ to deserve all this happiness ? There you sit, with such a superfluity of contentment within that it is positively making you hideously plump, and is beginning to develop a double chin. Pray, madam, have you been better than other people ? Have you done more good to your fellow-creatures ? Have you done more good, for instance, than *she* has,—my poor little friend who is so terribly afflicted ? I’m afraid you’ve a very bad account to give of yourself : so I don’t believe we all get our deserts, or where in the world should I be ? Dear me ! what contrasts there are in life ! If I could only

give a small portion of my superabundant happiness to my poor little friend, now, how glad I should be! If I could do that I'd be content to—to sweep a crossing, which seems to be the lowest depth to which human nature is capable of descending; though to my mind the sweepers always look particularly independent, and, I'm told, make a heap of money."

Blanche paid a long visit to her friend that morning. She tried hard to impart some of her own superabundant happiness, as she called it, but the widow would not be comforted. Perpetual sorrow was beginning to tell, even on her pure nature, and to embitter the spirit that was before all sweetness and patience. Blanche tried her best to lead her thoughts to the future of her child, and the new interest in life springing from that source.

"Surely this embodiment of sleepy happiness endears life to you," she said.

"You will think me terribly discontented," Lady Deverell answered, "but even dear little baby makes me sad. Think of his future, without a father to guide and guard,—the first of his race with an empty title,—the estates, the fortune, which should have been his, gone forever."

"Let him carve his own fortune, then," Blanche rejoined. "He'll value it ten times as much. We always value a thing in proportion to the difficulty we have in getting it. That's what makes Clement so fond of me."

Her inherent light-heartedness would break out even in her most serious moments. You could no more suppress it than you could suppress the frolics of a kitten or the inconsequent leaps of a young lamb. She went on again,—seriously, however.

"Kate, dear, I am not, as a rule, given to preaching, but is it not a little like rebellion against the decrees of Providence to live so completely in the past? to forget the blessing that has been sent you in this twenty-three inches, or there-

about, of ruddy flesh and blood? I know you have had a great trial; but there are thousands of others suffering from similar griefs."

"That is no alleviation of mine," Lady Deverell rejoined, quickly. "Why should it be? Knowing what I suffer, it is an aggravation of my grief to think others have to endure the same."

"You have had no more news, I suppose?" Blanche said, after a pause.

"No. I cannot even hope for any. The remnant of the crew that was picked up in the boat said that there was scarcely a fragment of the raft left when they last saw it. My poor darling! Oh, if I could only feel that he thought kindly of me at the last!"

"You may be sure of that."

"I believe he loved me even when urged by that fatal pride to leave me. I knew if the truth ever reached him that I could not hope for his forgiveness. Like a miserable gamester, I staked my all upon the cast, and lost. But I shall infect you with my gloom if I go on like this. You are looking as bright as ever, Blanche. Is your life to be always made up of roses and honey?"

"Indeed it would seem so; but I would give up a good many hives of the latter if I could impart some to you. I cannot admit the theory that in each one's life the joys and griefs are equally balanced."

"Why?"

"Because if they are there's a terribly bad lookout for me in the future. I've had more than my share of the sweets already. There's a ring at the gate. I must really run away. I have so much to do this morning, and I don't want to encounter any visitors."

As Blanche departed, Susan entered the room and announced "Madame Rigaud."

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## REVELATIONS.

“‘MADAME RIGAUD.’ I know no such name, Susan.”

“No, my lady, but she wishes to see you on very particular business,” answered Susan.

“Then I suppose I must admit her. Yes; let her come up at once.”

That indefinite hope sprang up in Lady Deverell’s heart once more that it might be something connected with *him*. She blamed herself for her folly, almost before the thought was formed, but such thoughts, in spite of herself, would rush into her mind at times, and left her more sorrowful than ever when they vanished.

Susan reappeared, showing in a neat-looking Frenchwoman, of a comparatively humble station in life. She was about sixty years of age, and possessed a countenance which at once disposed people favorably towards her.

“You wish to speak with me, I understand,” Lady Deverell said, motioning her to a seat.

“Yes, my lady, very particularly. What I have to say will be a great surprise to you,—possibly a great shock; and it is a long story.”

Her English was almost perfect, and she spoke impressively. The widow’s heart beat fast. “It is not possible you bring me any intelligence of my lost husband?” she said, hurriedly.

“Alas! no, my lady; but I have a strange tale to narrate, for all that. I should tell you first that I have endeavored to see you for some months past. Always have I been prevented,

—sometimes by my own absence, sometimes by yours. I am thankful that I meet you at last."

Lady Deverell laid aside her work. All sorts of vague fears flitted through her mind at the woman's tone. She waited eagerly for more.

"Pray go on," she said.

"I must collect my thoughts a little, my lady, to know best how to begin. The sum and substance of my communication is that you are not the daughter of James Price."

The widow looked at her in utter bewilderment, as if she did not take in the words.

"That I am not the daughter of James Price!" she repeated, with wide wondering eyes.

"No, my lady: it may seem very strange to you, but it is perfectly true, nevertheless."

For a moment Lady Deverell entertained a doubt as to her visitor's sanity; but she looked so thoroughly calm, and had such a placid motherly countenance, that the notion was at once dismissed.

"You cannot know what you are saying," she gasped. "Not the daughter of James Price? How can you assert such an impossibility?"

"It is not an impossibility, as I will prove to you; but you must be prepared for a great surprise. There is one with whom you have been associated for many years,—for whom I am told you always entertained a great regard. It is he with whom you are connected. Can you guess who it is?"

"I cannot for a moment imagine. Pray do not keep me in suspense. To whom do you refer?"

"To Sir John Bolt,—your grandfather."

Again the thought of the woman's insanity crossed Lady Deverell's mind. She rose from her chair and gazed at her doubtfully.

"Pray be seated, my lady. I know it must seem an in-



credible story to you, but let me entreat you to hear me quietly to the end. You will then know that every word I have stated is true."

With a throbbing heart, Lady Deverell again seated herself. What other wonders was her life to reveal? She had already had her share of shocks and trials, but never such a surprise as this. She listened eagerly for more.

"I don't know, my lady, whether you ever heard of a son of Sir John Bolt's who turned out very wild. I learned all about him from James Price when you were a baby in arms. That son was your father."

"But how do you know this?" Lady Deverell questioned. "I have heard of this son; but you are making the most wild assertions. Have you any proofs of what you say?"

"Wait; I will get on as quickly as I can. You know the admiral was away at sea for years after his wife's early death. He left his son to be brought up by some relations,—terribly strict people, who thwarted the boy in every way. He had a high spirit, a quick temper, and as he grew up he broke into open rebellion. When the admiral came home, he foolishly listened to the report of his relations, and took part against the boy. He was a great disciplinarian, and could not countenance rebellion in one so young. The harsh measures he adopted estranged the boy more and more from him, and before he came home from sea a second time there was another long catalogue of offenses to be punished. I need not, however, dwell on this part of my story. The young man when he came of age inherited a small fortune from his mother's family, and with this he went abroad and married a girl in a much lower grade than himself. The admiral was furious,—vowed that he would never see his face again; and from that moment, I believe, he never opened his lips on the subject to a living soul."

"Yes, yes. I have heard all this. Pray go on."

"Well, my lady, at this time I was living with my husband at Boulogne. We had been married about a year, when my husband was carried off by the conscription. We had a dear little baby, who died almost immediately after his departure. I was inconsolable. I thought I should have died with grief, when suddenly something occurred to divert my thoughts. A neighbor came to me, one evening, to say that a young English gentleman in the town had just lost his wife in childbirth. The baby was strong and well, and they wanted a wet-nurse to take to England with them. The terms they offered were liberal, and I consented to go. The baby put into my hands was yourself."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed Lady Deverell. It was almost too much for her to believe, but there was a tone of truthfulness in the woman which carried conviction with it. "Oh, pray go on," she continued, eagerly.

"I found the father in sad grief, and in terribly broken health. I could see he was not long for this world, and he knew it himself. He told me he was going back to England to make provision for his child, and a few days after we crossed. We went to a place you most likely know well, Sandport. On the way, Mr. Bolt gave me a short sketch of his plans, and let me know as much of his history as was necessary. Soon after we arrived, he went away, telling me that he intended to place his child in the care of a good woman, who had been very kind to him as a boy, and that in case anything happened to him he had left written instructions, in a certain portmanteau, as to what I was to do. I think he must have known that his end was near. He ought not to have gone in the state of health he was then in, but some way he didn't seem to care to live after his wife's death, and I had no power to stop his going. I never saw him again. He died at a small country inn near Sir John's old estate."

"I know ; I know," moaned Lady Deverell. "I have heard the story. How little I knew the sad truth !"

"A day or two after, James Price made his appearance. He had been with young Mr. Bolt at the time of his death, or at least just before, and, in compliance with the dying wish of the young man, had promised to take care of his child and bring it up as his own. It seems that Price's wife had just lost a baby, so you were taken in the place of it. Nobody lived near them, and nobody took the trouble to inquire into particulars : so there was little or no difficulty in passing you off as their own. I went with you to the cottage, and, finding Mrs. Price in a very weak state, I stayed there some months helping her and attending to you, my lady ; for you were a sweet little thing, and I loved you as my own child."

Lady Deverell put out her hand. This touch of affection went to her heart. It was all so strange, so marvelous. She could hardly trust herself to speak.

"Well, my lady, Jim Price had made a solemn promise not to reveal the secret of your birth to Sir John except under certain conditions. That is, if he saw symptoms of relenting in the old man.

"I begged him not to lose an opportunity of communicating with the admiral, for I didn't like you to be kept out of your rights. Long before the admiral came back, however, I was obliged to leave, on account of my husband's return, a confirmed invalid. The south of France was recommended, and we went to Pau, where I started a lodging-house for English people. I had picked up the language very fairly, and got on very well. Gradually I began to think less and less of my strange adventure in England. A family of my own began to come on, and after a time I ceased to have any communication with Price and his wife. It was very wrong of me, and I am sorry for it now."

She paused a moment, and then resumed :

"Now comes the strangest part of my story, my lady. It was only last year that an old gentleman came to take rooms in our house. He had been ordered to Pau by the English doctors, and he seemed in very feeble health. When I first saw him I was struck by the likeness to somebody I had seen before, and the moment I heard his name—Sir John Bolt—I felt certain that he was the father of the gentleman who had taken me to England. My curiosity was greatly excited to know whether he had ever been told the secret of your birth. Jim Price had bound me over by the most solemn promises never to reveal the secret, and I had been well paid for keeping it. I tried in every way to get at the truth without breaking my word. I said I had lived at one time with a family in the neighborhood, and made believe to inquire after some people I had known, but I could never get Sir John to talk on the subject. Well, while I was wondering what was best to be done, he was taken very ill indeed,—so ill that I thought he could not last long. I took upon myself the duty of attending to him, as I thought it might give me the opportunity I wished for. I questioned the doctor closely as to his condition, and he told me he thought him in a very precarious state,—in fact, that he might not last many days. He asked me if he had no relations near, or if there were none to send for. So I told him I would find out. The old gentleman was quite conscious when I went back to him, and I put the question.

"‘Have you no relations or friends, who ought to be informed how ill you are?’ I said.

"The question seemed to disturb him. ‘Relations?—no, none,’ he answered. ‘Friends I might have,—one in particular, if I knew where to find him; but it is of no consequence.’

"Then, I felt sure either that he knew nothing about

you, or that you were dead. I knew I was safe in speaking now.

"‘Sir John,’ I said, ‘have you never been told anything particular about your son?’

"‘My son! My God, what do you know about my son?’ he exclaimed, turning suddenly in his bed and fixing his eyes upon me.

"Then I told him, as quietly as I could, all that had taken place at his son’s death, and the story of your bringing up. At first, naturally, he would not believe me; but I happened to have some old letters by me, which placed the truth of my statement beyond a doubt. The old man went into a perfect frenzy. I almost regretted what I had done; I thought it would hasten his end. ‘Katie my own grandchild!’ he exclaimed. ‘Oh, my God! my God! to think I did not know it!’ Then he grew quieter. ‘It was the prompting of nature, —my love for her. Thank God, I have provided for her! thank God for that! Madame Rigaud, you must go to England to-morrow and try to find her. Oh, my son, my son!’ —But you are moved, my dear lady."

Lady Deverell was indeed. The tears were streaming down her cheeks. "Oh, my dear old friend, my dear, dear grandfather! How little I knew why I loved you so much! But he recovered?" she suddenly added. "I heard only the other day that he was alive and well."

"Heaven be praised, he is!"

"Then why have I not heard this before?"

"I will tell you, my lady. Whether or not it was the thought of having discovered his grandchild which wrought such an improvement, I do not know, but it is certain that the next day there was a marvelous change for the better, and he continued to mend rapidly. He was most anxious to come to England to seek you out himself, but the doctor would not hear of it in his weak condition. As the days passed by, he

became more and more impatient, and at length dispatched me. To my intense disappointment, I found you were gone to Madeira. I wrote to Sir John for instructions, and by return of post he informed me that I might come back, as he intended to come to England himself before you returned home, and in the mean time he would write. Alas! when I reached home I found he had had a relapse, and for many weeks I was in terrible anxiety about him. Only yesterday did we reach England, and I found you were in London."

Lady Deverell started to her feet. "Is Sir John—is my grandfather here?" she eagerly cried.

"Indeed he is, my lady,—scarcely able to move from his bed, but all anxiety to see you."

"Oh, let me go to him at once. Why did you not tell me he was here?"

"I wished to prepare you. I wished to prevent a scene. Indeed, my lady, he is too ill to bear it."

"But he is not too ill to see me. I must see him. I must be everything to him now. Oh, heaven be thanked for this!"

The reaction was almost too much for her,—the change from inactive grief to active joy. There was a flush on her cheek, a wild light in her eyes, which had not been there for many a weary week. Before an hour had elapsed, she was folded in her grandfather's arms, and all the old man's long-pent-up love was poured forth upon her as she knelt by his bedside and blessed God for sending her a new source of comfort in her bitter need.

## CHAPTER XLV.

## A STRANGE MEETING.

"It was d—d hard lines for Katie, look at it which way you will. But you've made a clean breast of it, and God knows you've suffered enough yourself. It's not for me to reproach you, so I shall say no more; though, as I said before, it was hard lines for Katie."

The speaker was our old friend Jim Price. He stood with his back to the mantel-piece, in his office in Melbourne, where Deverell had sought him out on his arrival in Australia. The baronet had made a clean breast of it, as Jim had admitted; but the face of the latter was still flushed with indignation at the thought of what his little favorite Katie had undergone.

Jim had become an important man in the colony. He was rapidly accumulating a large fortune. His experience and practical knowledge stood him in good stead. His advice was sought at all hands, and he was respected as much as any man in Melbourne.

But for the change which had come upon Deverell, he would never have sought out his supposed brother-in-law. It was the last thing in his thoughts when he left England. It was the first that occurred to him when he landed in Melbourne. Thus do circumstances change our very nature.

He had told Jim the whole story from beginning to end, concealing nothing, mitigating nothing. He had even submitted to Jim's implied reproach without a murmur. His love for his wife had returned with such overwhelming force that the presence even of her brother was a delight to him.

•He had, moreover, appealed to him for funds to carry him back to England, and for his advice with regard to a ship.

"I can secure you a birth in the Northumberland, and I don't think you could do better. She is a first-class ship, and has made the quickest passage on record. She sails in ten days, but she'll reach England sooner than the ship that sails next week," said Jim.

"Then I'll decide on her," Deverell answered. "What shall I do, meanwhile?"

"I should advise you to take a run up country, and see what's to be seen in the neighborhood. You won't get the chance again."

Deverell felt a strange repugnance to extending his journey farther; the dread of some new calamity haunted him; and yet he felt a strong desire to see something more of a country which had undergone such marvelous changes in so short a period. He shook off his vague fears, and resolved to start the following morning for the interior.

That resolution, strangely enough, was the turning-point of his future life.

He first visited Ballarat, and spent a day in inspecting the extensive gold-mines which abound there, then pushed on over the Australian Pyrenees to the Castlemaine district, enjoying some peeps at the Bush, by the way, and finding much to amuse him in the still somewhat primitive life of these far scenes. In spite of the novelty of all around him, he was terribly impatient for the coming of the day when he would be fairly on his way home again, and began now to count the hours which intervened before the departure of the ship.

On the third day after leaving Melbourne, he was sitting, after an early dinner, in the coffee-room of an hotel in one of the numerous townships of the district. He was intending to return to Melbourne that night, and was waiting for the train which was to start at five in the afternoon. His thoughts,



as they always did now, turned to his distant home. He pictured to himself over and over again the joy which would follow his arrival, the thought of his future happiness, and the quiet life—far removed from the world whose censure he had so much dreaded—which he had resolved he would henceforth lead. He had done with society; he had had enough of adventure. He had suffered in a few years as much sorrow, mental and physical, as many men endure in a lifetime. Repose was what he looked forward to in the future,—repose in the companionship of one whom he still loved with all the ardent passion of youth, one whose loving smile he knew would welcome him, come when and how he might.

He was so intent on these thoughts, and was revolving in his mind so many projects for the future, that he was for some time unconscious of the conversation of some people who were seated at a table behind him. Deverell's table was in the corner farthest from the door, and he was so situated that any one entering the room could not catch sight of his face. The three men who sat at the table nearer the door had entered after him, and, until their dinner was brought in, had been intent on some newspapers, and had spoken but little. As the meal proceeded, however, their conversation grew louder, though it was chiefly confined to one speaker, the others answering his observations in a somewhat cautious tone, as if conscious that there were strangers present.

Attracted by some remark delivered in a tone of increasing emphasis, Deverell found himself at length listening almost unconsciously. The observation was responded to by one of the party who had not before spoken, and in a tone sufficiently loud for Deverell to catch the words. Now for the first time they fell upon his ear with a startling distinctness. There was no mistaking the intonation: the voice was that of Percival Keith.

For a few moments Deverell sat like one paralyzed. Then

his impulse was to turn and satisfy himself with eyes as well as ears that the man who had brought all his misery upon him was at length within his reach. Instantly, however, the impulse was arrested, for he felt that if he betrayed his presence the villain might yet escape him. It was a hard struggle to remain calm under the circumstances, but he compelled himself to do so, and listened.

"Well," said the man with the loud, harsh voice, "I don't see any difficulty in the way. If you agree to find the capital, I'll give my experience, and Jack here can help in many ways. I've been beastly unlucky at the diggings, and am sorry I ever gave up my farm. The run is a good one, and if you choose to go into the thing liberally, as you say you do, you may have one of the best farms in the colony in a year or two, and turn your capital over double and treble."

"It's a bargain, then?" replied Keith.

"There's my hand on it," said the first speaker. "Now let's have a drop of something better in the way of liquor, to wet the bargain. Jack, ring the bell. We must be on the move, if you intend to return there to-night."

There was a pause; then the man resumed:

"You're a rum customer, though, and no mistake. All the chaps that come out here from the old country do it to make money: you say you want to go into it for occupation, and to carry out your notions of farming. Recollect this, my friend, English notions won't always do in Australia: so you must mind how you go to work."

"It's for that reason I asked you to join me. You have been at it, you tell me, for years, and, but for this new 'rush' in your neighborhood, would have been at it still. Well, you're just the man I want; and I promise you you won't repent joining me."

"Well, Mr. King, here's your health, then, and success to the new undertaking."

The man took up the fresh bottle which the waiter had brought, and the three filled their glasses. Deverell knew there was little time to be lost. He had determined to try and get out of the room unseen, and denounce the culprit to the landlord, in the hope of inducing him to take measures for his arrest. He saw all the difficulty of his position. Alone and unknown in this strange country, how could he expect to convince any one of the truth of his statement? What authority had he for the arrest of this man? and how could he prevent his flight while the necessary steps were being taken? Still, the plan he had decided on was his only chance. He raised his eyes from the table before him, and, stretched out his hand for his hat. As he did so, he happened to glance into a looking-glass which hung upon the wall opposite him, and in that glass his eyes met those of Percival Keith.

For a few seconds he sat gazing as if spell-bound. He saw that Keith turned deadly pale, and seemed to shrink beneath his glance. Then with a sudden movement the villain rose and darted from the room.

In an instant Deverell was after him. In the hall he paused: there was a door leading out at either end, and he knew not which way to take. He rushed to the nearest and looked out. Keith was nowhere to be seen. He flew back to the other. It was too late: the culprit had disappeared. Meanwhile, the other two men, astonished at the sudden disappearance of their companion and the hurried movements of Deverell, had followed into the passage.

"What's up?" said the principal spokesman. "What the devil does all this mean?"

"Look here, my friend," replied Deverell; "the man who has just left you is a swindler and a scoundrel. Help me to find him, and I promise you shall be rewarded handsomely."

"Come, come!" replied the man; "this is all infernal

nonsense. He's one of the nicest and most liberal gents as I've known for a long time. What the devil do you mean by frightening him away like this?"

"It is that very fact which should prove to you the truth of my statement," said Deverell, hurriedly. "If he is innocent, why should he try to escape me?"

The man was honest at heart: he seemed struck with this remark, and hesitated a moment.

"That's true," he said; "but what proof have you got?"

"None whatever. Only confront me with him, and you'll soon see whether or not he is guilty. But, for heaven's sake, don't let us delay. All this time he is putting himself beyond the chance of capture. Let me entreat you to help me."

"Steady, steady!" replied the man. "I don't quite take it in yet; though I must say he has always seemed to me an uncommon shy dog. If what you say is true, you've done me out of a nice snug berth. I don't half like it."

"You shall be no sufferer, I promise you, if we can only lay that fellow by the heels," replied Deverell.

The man was speculative from his hat to his boots. He began to think he might drive a good bargain.

"We'll catch him if he's anywhere in the colony," he said. "Name your figure."

"There's no time to debate that. Anything you like, in reason."

"A hundred quid down?"

"Ay, double, if we can make him disgorge."

"I'm your man, then. Jack, run round to the stables and see if our horses are all square. He may have made off on one of 'em."

Jack departed, and returned a moment after to report that the horses were all right. The man who appeared to be his master looked uncertain what course to pursue. At this mo-

ment the sound of a train was heard from the railway, which was near at hand.

"Quick!" cried the man, rushing out of the front door. "I'd forgot it was so near the time for the train. Shouldn't wonder if he's done us now."

He set off at top speed for the railway, followed by Deverell and Jack. As they entered the inclosure by the station, they caught sight of the train just disappearing in the distance.

"He's escaped, after all," said Deverell.

"We don't know yet that he was in it," answered the man. "Hi, mate!" he exclaimed, as a porter appeared. "Did you notice how many passengers went from here by the last train?"

"Two,—a man and a woman."

"What sort of a man?"

"Short, with sandy beard."

"We're done safe enough, then," said the man. "Stop, though! we can telegraph to the next station, and get them to lay hold of him."

"We must get authority to do so."

"That's soon done. They know me here. Come to the police-station. There'll be time enough to send on a message after that."

The police-station was only a short distance away. Deverell gave a brief statement of the facts, but the police evidently regarded the statement, coming as it did from an entire stranger, with suspicion, and said that without a regular warrant they had no power to interfere, except in the case of an offense committed within their own district.

"Where is it probable he is gone?" asked Deverell, chafing at this unexpected obstacle.

"To Castlemaine. That's the nearest station to the run he has just bought," said the man.

"You think he would return there?"

"Having got the start of us by three hours, I haven't a

doubt about it. There's no train before six. He knows that well enough. He left his horse at Castlemaine. What he'll do will be to ride back to his station, pick up any valuables he's got there, and go straight away into the bush, God knows where. If what you say is true, he won't wait for you to come for him, law or no law."

"Is there no way of overtaking him?"

"I don't see any but to follow him the same way. Stay, though! I've an idea. Can you ride?"

"Yes."

"Are you good for a fifty-mile spin through the bush?"

"Yes, if we can catch him."

The man pondered a moment. Then he turned to his follower.

"Jack, can you make tracks straight away to Hawker's Creek?"

"Yes, if it holds fine, and we've a good moon."

"No fear of that. The moon will be up before sunset, and there ain't a cloud to be seen."

"What is your plan, then?" asked Deverell.

"This. He's living at present in a log house upon the run he's just taken. He's planned out a farm on a large scale. If I'd got the money he's going to spend, I'd take the next ship home to the old country. However, now I see his drift. He don't want to go home no more. Well, I was going to superintend the building for him, and afterwards the farm, as I know the place well. He's got twenty mile by rail, and twenty more to ride after, pretty near in the same direction, as the line goes away more north-beyond Castlemaine. If we go straight away through the bush with Jack for a guide, we may drop upon him before he gets away, as he'll calculate on our waiting for the next train. So we'd better start at once."

"But you forget I've nothing to ride."

"We can soon get over that difficulty. How are you off for dibs?"

"Not too well; but I've enough, I dare say."

"Are you good for a fiver?"

"Yes."

"Well, that'll square matters with the landlord yonder. He's got a nag that will carry you over to the creek like Flying Dutchman. He knows me, and knows that I sha'n't let you steal it. Though it may happen that you might want to keep it for a day or two if Mr. King has made off. But we're losing time."

"Just what I was thinking," growled Jack.

"Right you are, Jack. Now, no more palaver. You can tell us the story as we go along; at least, as much as you're a mind to."

They stepped quickly back to the hotel. In a few minutes a bargain was concluded with the landlord, who was made acquainted with the circumstances. There was that in Dev-erell's face and manner which carried conviction with it, and all three entered into his service enthusiastically. Possibly the thought of future reward was also an incentive, for in the best of us the hope of gain, deny it as we will, is a mighty stimulus. Within half an hour from Keith's departure, they were mounted and away, going steadily through the suburbs of the little township, faster between the outlying farms and gardens, and then away out on the open plains, at a pace which, if no obstacles were encountered, would put the fifty miles behind them before midnight.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## THROUGH THE BUSH.

THAT ride was a memorable one to Deverell. The remembrance of it came back to him years after, with all its incidents imprinted on his recollection as vividly as when it took place. Except when the nature of the ground obliged them to do so, they never slackened their pace for a moment. Every now and then, however, an awkward bit of scrub was encountered, through which Jack, who knew the country well, guided them with unerring skill. Troublesome crab-holes, too, impeded their course, and caused them to slacken speed and pick their way cautiously; but out upon the rolling plains they made play at a furious speed, conscious that every moment was of value, and that it was by no means likely that Keith, or King, as he chose to call himself, would tarry at the station a minute longer than was necessary to pick up his most important belongings.

The sun went down, and the broad Australian moon changed to silver all the golden haze of the summer evening. Silence reigned over the vast, unpeopled plains, unbroken except by the beat of their horses' hoofs on the virgin turf. Wild creatures, strange to Deverell, started across their course, from out the undergrowth, which here and there lay thickly on either side. Now and again a bell-bird, startled from sleep by their mad career, made off on rapid wing, with its wild note, like a veritable bell sounding through the still night air. The timid opossum would spring into the sheltering fork of a tree, and lie as motionless as the tree itself, until the disturbers of



its rest had passed. Afar in the clear moonlight, the wallaby might be seen bounding over the grassy plains,—a tempting sight to Jack and his employer, who longed more than once to turn aside and indulge in a moonlight chase.

Jack led the way by a few yards. Deverell and the other man rode side by side as well as the nature of the ground would permit. They were going stride for stride over a level bit of the plain, where the weird gum-trees, with their sharply-pointed leaves, and strips of white bark hanging from their branches in ghastly festoons, stood out spectral in the moonlight, and cast black circles of shade upon the smooth sun-dried turf.

"As we have been thrown so strangely together, it would be as well for me to know your name," said Deverell.

"Sparks,—Dick Sparks," answered the man; "a name well known in this district. I was a chum of Jim Price's when he found the big nugget. You may have heard tell of him in Melbourne."

"You a chum of Jim Price?" exclaimed Deverell, fairly reining up his steed with amazement.

"And no mistake," said the man. "One of the luckiest beggars I ever clapped eyes on. He's managed to save all his money, but I've spent all mine. A right good fellow he was, too. Do you happen to know him?"

"Well, I ought, considering he is my brother-in-law. I was with him in Melbourne four days since."

"What a devilish queer thing! You Jim Price's brother-in-law! Give us your hand. By George, I'd go through fire and water for anybody belonging to Jim."

He ranged up alongside without slackening speed, and took Deverell's hand in his own with a hearty grip.

"Keep well away to your right," shouted Jack, turning in his saddle. "There's a nasty bit of rotten ground on the other side."

"All right, Jack; keep on going as fast as you can, my boy. By George! to think you're old Jim's brother-in-law! Well, that licks creation."

Deverell was equally surprised at this second strange rencontre, but, when their surprise had somewhat abated, they fell to talking of Jim's early career and recent good fortune, and Deverell became acquainted with many estimable traits in his brother-in-law's character, which were before unknown. In this conversation, so interesting to both, the hours flew swiftly by. At length Jack stopped again.

"What's up now?" said Sparks. "Jack has pulled up, I see, and is waiting for us."

They were on the border of a thick covert again, and Jack came back a few yards to meet them.

"We're close upon the station now," he said. "I've brought you here by the shortest cut, and in quicker time, I reckon, than it has ever been done before. What's your plan?"

"Whereabouts is the log house?" asked Dick Sparks.

"Straight through this thick bit of cover in a clearing of half a mile or thereabout. The log house lays at the other side of the clearing pretty nigh. If we get through the scrub, and he should be on the lookout, he couldn't help seeing us, and you may be sure he'd give us a warm reception."

"How are you off for this sort of thing?" inquired Sparks, drawing forth a revolver.

"I've nothing in the way of weapons with me," answered Deverell.

"Hand over yours, Jack," said Sparks. "When you have been as long in the colony as I have, you'll take care to carry a six-barreled persuader always with you. *You* needn't get into the scrimmage, Jack. When we are through the scrub you shall keep away and get round to the rear, so as to give us notice which way he goes if he should bolt."

Jack looked, if anything, somewhat disappointed. Stirring



adventure was second nature to him, and he liked to be in the thick of the fray. However, he said nothing.

They picked their way cautiously through the close undergrowth for about a quarter of a mile; when they reached the farther side, they stood in the shadow of the trees, and contemplated the scene before them.

The ground fell rapidly for about six or seven hundred yards towards a log hut, which stood out bright in the moonlight against the background of trees which shut in the clearing on the farther side. To the right, a short distance away, extensive preparations for building were to be seen, in the shape of stones, scaffold-poles, carts, and barrows.

All was silent at this hut; but a solitary light gleamed there, although it was now past midnight. This was a welcome sight, for it was evident that some one was still wakeful within, and they concluded that at so late an hour it could be no other than Keith.

"He's there, safe enough," said Sparks.

"Look there, just to the right of the angle of the house. There's the tail of his horse. He's hitched him up outside to be ready for another start. We've no time to lose, take my word for it. It's no use trying to catch him if he gets away; our horses are fairly done."

"What course do you propose?"

"This. You get away, Jack, under the shade of the trees, till you're abreast of the stones and carts yonder. Then when you see us ride out from here, make play down the hill behind the carts, and get to the other side without being seen, if you can. Stop! After all, you'd better take my revolver. You may get a chance of stopping him, and one will be enough for us. Now be off."

Jack rode cautiously along, just within the cover of the scrub. When he got abreast of the carts, he stopped and looked back.

"Now," said Sparks, "we'd better get over this bit of open at top speed, for if he sees us coming he'll be away before we can say Jack Robinson. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Hand me the revolver. I'll go first. I'm more used to this sort of thing than you."

Deverell saw the force of these words, and handed over the weapon. Then Sparks put spurs into his mare, and rode down the slope at full speed, followed by Sir Arthur.

---


## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE LOG HOUSE.

ABOUT thirty yards in front of the log house were two enormous gum-trees, standing a few feet apart. Keeping these in a line with the house, they were well sheltered from any possible attack while passing over the intervening ground. It seemed to Deverell, however, only a few seconds before they were abreast of the trees and shooting past them at a furious pace.

At this moment from the window of the house the barrel of a revolver flashed in the moonlight, and there were two sharp reports in quick succession. The aim was true. Deverell's horse came heavily to the ground with a ball in his breast, and Sparks, throwing up his arms, rolled bodily from the saddle, and lay motionless on the ground.

Deverell was bruised by the fall of his horse and the violence with which he himself was thrown to the ground. Recovering himself quickly, he seized the revolver which had fallen from Sparks's hand, and rushed to the nearest of the



two trees, sheltering himself behind the broad bole. To have advanced with the enemy hidden from view and ready to shoot him down would have been literal suicide; and yet, now that poor Sparks had fallen, his position was as hopeless where he was, unless Jack could make a diversion in the rear. He looked anxiously away to the right, but could see nothing of him.

What was to be done? He waited a few minutes, in the utmost anxiety. His great fear was that the villain would escape; and yet he was powerless to prevent it. That rapid ride down to the hut had been an error in judgment. If they had stolen up cautiously on either side, their approach might not have been perceived. But it was too late to think of that now.

The quick report of a pistol cut short his soliloquy. It came from the skirts of the wood, at the back of the log house. Instantly it was followed by another, and then Deverell heard the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the turf, coming rapidly towards him.

He could only conclude that Keith was endeavoring to make off, and that Jack had intercepted him. At all hazards, he must see how matters stood. He left the shelter of the tree, and rushed towards the cottage. The front door was not even fastened. Deverell entered the house. It was empty. He sprang to the window opening at the back, and looked out. A man was galloping towards him at full speed, while another lay stretched on the ground some distance away. Beyond this, again, Jack came into view from the shadow of the farther trees, and was riding at full gallop after the flying horseman.

Deverell saw that the man who was nearing him was not Keith. He felt sure, however, that he must have been connected with the shots fired from the cottage, or Jack would not be in pursuit. He raised his revolver and fired. The

man winced a little, but did not fall, and the next moment he was round the angle of the house and out of sight. Deverell ran to the front. The fugitive was going up the hill like lightning, making straight for the wood through which his pursuers had just come. The next moment Jack was beside Deverell.

"Mount and ride after him," he cried. "The most notorious bush-ranger in the colony."

"It is useless: our horses would scarcely reach the wood."

"D—n him!" cried Jack. "That's the second time he has escaped me; but I've winged his pal, anyway. That'll be a good fifty pound in my pocket."

"But about Keith? Have you seen him?"

"Devil a bit! Have you?"

"No."

"That's queer! He can't have arrived. These fellows were making free with his stores while he was away. But where's the governor?"

"Yonder, and, I'm afraid, badly hurt. We must look to him at once."

They advanced to where Sparks lay upon the ground. As they neared him he raised himself on his elbow, and looked about him, apparently mystified.

"There's life in the old dog yet!" shouted Jack, running forward, and assisting Sparks to rise.

"Yes, but it was precious near knocked out of him, though," answered Sparks. "Look at that."

He held up the felt hat he wore. There was a hole in front where the bullet had entered, and another at the back where it had made its exit. Along the top of his head was a clear cut, showing the course of the ball, which had stunned him.

The poor horse which Deverell had ridden next claimed their attention. It was quite dead,—shot through the heart.

It was a most unfortunate occurrence altogether. Keith might be near at hand,—might have been warned off even by the report of the pistols. In any case, if they lay in wait for him, his suspicions would be aroused by the dead horse and the hoof-prints in the turf. Sparks suggested that it would be better for Jack and himself to conceal themselves in the bush on either side of the track from Castlemaine, so as to take him in the rear, and for Deverell meanwhile to remain in the house. Jack had made off in the direction of the man he had shot, fearing that he might recover and get away. They followed him to the spot, and found that his revolver had done its work. The man was quite dead, with a bullet in his brain.

"A good night's work for you, Jack," said Sparks, when he saw the man's face. "That fellow and his mate have committed more murders than any dozen men in the colony. Two to one they thought there were more of us coming, or we shouldn't have got off so easy."

"Lend me a hand to take him into the house," said Jack.

"You must be quick about it, then, for we have no time to lose if we would nab the other villain."

They carried the body to the house, and laid it on the floor, in a corner. Then Sparks and Jack mounted and rode off up the slope, intending to lie in wait within sight of the cottage, and to follow Keith if he ventured to approach. Should he take alarm and turn tail, a pistol-shot was to be the signal for Deverell to follow them. On the other hand, if Keith approached from any other direction, the same signal from Deverell was to bring them back to him.

Five minutes after, the two men had disappeared in the shadow of the trees, above the slope. Deverell sat, revolver in hand, looking from the window out into the bright moonlight. All was so calm and still that he could scarcely realize the horrible scene which had been so recently enacted. What

a marvelous succession of events and hairbreadth escapes had brought him to his present position! It seemed like a dream that he was here alone, in the wild Australian bush, waiting for the coming of the man whose villainy had wrought all the misery of his life,—alone, with a dead man for a companion, and the stillness of the desert on all around. Situated as he was, he became almost superstitious, and fancied he heard a slight movement in the corner where the body lay. The moonlight streaming through the window fell full upon the corpse, and lit it with that uncertain light which often suggests movement in an inanimate form.

Deverell rose and advanced to the body. He touched the hands and cheeks. They were already getting cold. The man was unmistakably dead. He returned to his seat by the window. As he did so, the sound he had fancied he heard before was repeated,—a sound like the movement of some living thing, accompanied by a kind of faint sigh. For a moment his hair seemed lifted by a positive superstitious terror. He turned quickly. The moonlight lay in a bright streak upon the floor between him and the dead bush-ranger, and midway between him and the body he saw a sight which sent a sudden chill of horror to his heart. It was a thin stream of blood, creeping slowly across the band of moonlight, and coming from a dark corner by the window. He strained his eyes eagerly in that direction, and then for the first time saw the figure of another man lying prostrate on the ground. With his revolver ready, he rushed forward to see who it was. The next moment he was dragging the man into the light. A scream of pain and terror rang from the prostrate form, the moonlight fell full upon it, and once more Deverell found himself face to face with Percival Keith.

"Mercy, mercy! for God's sake!" the culprit cried, when he saw the man he had so deeply wronged kneeling over him, weapon in hand. He had fancied that moment would be his



last; but, in spite of all his wrongs, Deverell could not help feeling for the suffering wretch before him. He was bleeding from two knife-wounds in the back. The bush-rangers had overtaken him as he attempted to escape from the house, had stabbed him with their knives, and had thrown his dead body, as they thought it, into the corner of the hut. He had recovered consciousness only to see the man he had wronged sitting near him in the moonlight, and, in spite of his miserable condition, had feared to make his presence known until betrayed by the agony he was enduring from his wounds.

Deverell returned to the door and fired his revolver. The next moment he saw Sparks and Jack coming down the hill at full gallop, fearing some new catastrophe. He advanced to meet them.

"We may save ourselves further trouble, Sparks. I have found him in the hut, so badly hurt that I wouldn't give much for his chance of life. You may put away your pistol for to-night."

\* \* \* \* \*

Before daybreak, medical aid had been procured from the nearest township, and such comforts as were needed for one in Keith's condition were brought by the workmen who were engaged on the farm-buildings. The doctor confirmed Deverell's opinion. Keith's wounds were so severe as to leave no chance of his life. How long he might survive was reduced to a question of hours, and it was thought better to tell him that his end was near. So it fell out that in that far spot of earth, away from home and all associations with early life, Deverell sat watching by the bedside of the man who had wronged him so deeply, urged by the anguish of the sufferer to tend him with almost a woman's care and solicitude, and, on the second day after, to close those eyes in death, which had looked into his own with penitence and gratitude to the last.

Not, however, before he had listened to a revelation which, under Providence, was to lead to the undoing of all the evil which had been done,—to hear which the hand of God had guided him over half the world, and brought him to this spot on the very day and hour when this awful retribution fell upon Keith.

---

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### HOPE REVIVED.


"HAS it ever occurred to you, dear Lady Deverell, that there might one day be a possibility of recovering the estates for your boy?"

The question was put by Mrs. Poingdestre. She and her husband were paying a somewhat unexpected visit to Lady Deverell, and were remaining to luncheon.

"My dear Mrs. Poingdestre, do not name such a thing. It is an impossibility."

"Yet I have always had the impression that the youthful Sir Arthur would one day be the proprietor of Norton Towers," quoth Val; "and the conviction is now stronger than ever."

"Pray do not trifle with me, Mr. Poingdestre," Lady Deverell answered, somewhat impatiently. "The subject is very, very painful," she continued. "Next to the loss of my dearest husband comes my sorrow at the future of my boy. Whatever his success in life may be, I know it must be embittered by the ever-present thought of his lost inheritance. If I could only have seen him in the old home, making a noble use of his wealth, and adding lustre to an ancient name by



generous deeds, it would have atoned for much that I have had to suffer. As it is——”

She was interrupted by Mrs. Poingdestre. “Stay, my dear Kate. You must not misjudge us. I had a motive for the question I asked. I must not keep you any longer in ignorance. You will forgive my having mentioned the subject, when I tell you that some circumstances have come to light, in a most strange manner, which may yet bring about the future you desire.”

Lady Deverell looked at her with increased amazement.

“Surely it is not possible?” she said.

“You may be sure it is, if my wife says so,” responded Val.

“Then, in pity, do not keep me in suspense. What is it you have heard?”

“It is a long story, and one that I almost fear to tell you,” Mrs. Poingdestre replied. “It will affect you too much.”

“Oh, no, no! Pray go on.”

She put aside her embroidery, with a hasty, feverish action, and sat with her arms resting on the work-table by her side, leaning forward and looking into her friend’s face intently. Mrs. Poingdestre also laid aside her work: she had a serious task before her, but she was equal to the occasion, and went on with a calm, grave face, and a steady voice, which was, however, full of sympathy and affection.

“I hardly know where to begin,” she said, “it is so long a story; but you must know that my husband had a great friend, who emigrated to Australia. We have just had a letter from him, in which he describes a strange meeting he has had with the man who has caused all your sorrows,—Mr. Percival Keith.”

“Percival Keith! Is it possible?”

“Indeed it is; and, more than this, the meeting led to startling revelations. Val, will you tell the story?”

"You'll do it much better yourself,—you've such a capital memory," said Val.

"Well, as you please; but you must correct me if I am wrong. It seems that Val's friend happened to be making an excursion into the bush, when he came upon a house which had been rifled by bush-rangers, and the owner stabbed and left for dead. Our friend and the men who were with him took charge of the wounded man, and did everything in their power to save him, but without success. His case was hopeless from the first. Once, when his mind was wandering, the man uttered a name which our friend recognized. It was that of your husband. His curiosity was aroused, for he knew he was a friend of ours, and had heard the story of his losses. When the fever left the man, and he was within a few hours of his death, our friend questioned him closely. It soon became evident that he had something on his mind which troubled him more than all his bodily sufferings, and, on being told that his end was near, he made a full confession of his crimes. I need hardly say that this man was Mr. Percival Keith."

"Yes, yes," cried Lady Deverell, "it is all very dreadful; but in what way can it affect my dear boy?"

"I have not yet told all the story. The wretched man went on to say that he wished to make all the restitution in his power. He said he had been engaged in a most nefarious system of fraud, with a person named Bulfinch. That is what Sir Arthur always suspected, is it not?"

"Yes, yes! he was convinced of it. Pray go on."

"It seems that they had arranged between them a scheme to effect Sir Arthur's ruin. Various fictitious deeds were drawn, some of which were really signed by Sir Arthur, who never examined their contents; but the most important bore forged signatures and attestations, which Bulfinch, who had a great knack of imitating handwriting, himself attached.

Keith and Bulfinch were themselves the supposed witnesses in many cases, so that they had the whole affair in their hands. They arranged that Keith, who was deeply involved and anxious to leave the country, should have ten thousand pounds, and Mr. Bulfinch was to quietly take possession of the estates as the supposed mortgagee. I hope I am stating things correctly, Val."

"Quite. As well as if it were all written down."

"It has made a deep impression, and that is the best kind of aid to memory. It seems that Bulfinch was the greater villain of the two. Not only did he perpetually hold out this temptation to Keith, but he obtained possession of some of his acceptances, and brought pressure to bear upon him in that way. Keith at length yielded."

"Yes, and was taken in himself," broke in Val, "for when matters were gone too far for him to retreat, and he was obliged to fly the country, Bulfinch kept back half the amount promised, and Keith only carried off five thousand pounds after all. But go on."

"With this sum," Mrs. Poingdestre resumed, "Keith decided to get to Australia. He concluded that in some remote part of the bush he might invest his money profitably, as he had always been accustomed to agricultural pursuits, and under a feigned name he thought he would be quite safe from detection. What a signal retribution overtook him, and how wondrously it has come to our knowledge, I have already told you."

"But what of the result?" cried Lady Deverell, with increasing anxiety. "This bare statement is of no avail against such a man as Mr. Bulfinch."

"I am coming to that. Before his death, Keith placed in our friend's keeping papers and letters in Mr. Bulfinch's own handwriting which would convict him over and over again. He had been careful to preserve these as a precaution in case of emergency. Besides this, the dying man's deposition was

taken in the presence of witnesses, and one of the witnesses is now on his way to England with the papers."

"If he has not already arrived," said Val.

Lady Deverell sat silent for a few moments, as if she could hardly yet comprehend the full meaning of the startling news her friends had brought her.

"Oh, if my darling had but lived to know this!" she at length exclaimed.

Meanwhile, significant looks were exchanged between Val and his wife. Lady Deverell detected them in a moment. "You have something further to tell me," she said.

"Yes, dear, but it is so startling that I almost fear the effect that it may have on you."

"Surely it is nothing that I could not bear after this joyful news?"

"It is of a nature so infinitely more joyful that I am afraid to tell you, lest it may not be realized."

She spoke with a low, earnest utterance unusual even with her. A wild light broke from Lady Deverell's eyes. The color flushed into her face.

"What do you mean? It cannot be of *him*?"

"Yes."

The next moment Lady Deverell was on her knees by her friend's side, clasping her hands, and gazing into her face as as if she would read her very soul.

"Is he alive?" she gasped.

"We hope so."

A low cry broke from the bereaved wife.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she said, falling back and pressing her hands to her heart. "Give me something more than hope. In pity, do not raise my hopes if they are again to be blighted. I cannot bear it. It would kill me."

Mrs. Poingdestre put her arm round her friend, drawing her gently towards her.

"It is because we hope it is true, dear, that we tell you ; so that if our hopes should be realized, it may not come upon you too suddenly. Tell her what it is, Val."

Val did not seem quite in a fit condition. There had not been many occasions in his life when his usually stolid nature had been overcome, but at present he found it convenient to keep his head averted, and he tried to abstract a handkerchief from his coat-pocket surreptitiously. He made an effort, however, and recovered his stolidity. Then he spoke.

"Our friend says there was a strange rumor afloat that Deverell was not drowned, after all, but clung to a piece of the wreck and was cast upon a small uninhabited island, from which, after much suffering, he was rescued by a passing vessel——"

He was interrupted by an exclamation from his wife. "Val, come here,—quick!" she cried.

The revulsion of feeling had been too much. Lady Deverell had fallen forward white and speechless. Val had her in his arms in a moment and carried her to a couch, while Mrs. Poingdestre soothed her with loving words and caresses.

Val brought her water, and his wife sat fanning her and sprinkling her face and forehead with woman's universal remedy, eau de Cologne. By and by she grew more calm.

"Oh, I am very weak," she said; "but my heart tells me you would not torture me so, unless you had faith in this rumor."

"I will say this much," replied Val: "my friend is too cautious a man to make any statement except on good authority. We shall hear more from this witness, probably. Meanwhile, keep up a brave heart."

"It is almost too much to think that I even dare hope. You will not leave me?" she added, seeing her friends preparing to depart.

"We must," Mrs. Poingdestre replied. "We have to meet a friend who is coming to town, and Val wishes to make in-

quiries with regard to the arrival of this witness. We will come to you again the moment we have any fresh intelligence."

"There is no time to be lost," added Val. "I must also set to work as soon as possible to lay this fellow Bulfinch by the heels. I always hated the man. It will be the greatest satisfaction to me to trip him up. By the way, we have not inquired for Sir John. How is he?"

"Wonderfully better. I am hoping to move him down here to-morrow. You may imagine what a comfort it will be to me to have him under my own roof."

"I can quite fancy it. What a wonderful revelation that was! I haven't got over it yet."

"Nor I. But it is an unspeakable happiness to me,—greater than I ever thought I could feel again, until you gave me this new hope."

"All's well that ends well;" and I believe this will end well, or I'm no true prophet," said Val.

With that he and his wife departed. When they were at a safe distance from the house, Val turned to her.

"It was an awfully clever ruse of yours, the invention of that friend. If we had told her the truth, I believe it would have finished her there and then."

"Do you think we may venture to bring him now?" asks the wife.

"Yes. The hope we have given her will become a positive belief before we return. No doubt, by the time we get back he will have made his deposition and got upon Bulfinch's track. I sha'n't allow him to delay that a moment. If that is done, there is no reason why we should not take him to Chiswick this afternoon."



## CHAPTER XLIX.

## MR. BULFINCH IN TROUBLE.

THIS revival of hope was like new life to Lady Deverell. It seemed to lift her out of the night of gloom in which she had been so long immersed, and brought her a feeling of ineffable happiness. If her husband were still alive, it would be something to her to know that, in however remote a spot he might be, he could not wholly forget her, and that dead, blank, utterly hopeless feeling which had come upon her with the news of his death would henceforth be softened by the thought that at some period, no matter how remote, he might learn to think differently with regard to the past, and perhaps even return to the home he had deserted.

She almost feared to think how much she was already building on this hope, and tried hard to restrain herself from dwelling on it. It was useless, however: the draught was too delicious to be set aside. If he were alive, she would be content to wait for years, with that far hope of his return present to her mind. All joys and sorrows are comparative. When he first left her, she felt that grief had reached its utmost bounds, but after the news of his death her previous state seemed one of comparative happiness, judged by the hopeless anguish she then endured.

When the first excitement occasioned by the intelligence she had heard began to abate, it was succeeded by a feeling of impatience for further news, which became at last an absolute craving. When would her friends return with a confirmation of the report they had heard? She could hardly hope for it

for some days, at least,—although the thought of waiting even until the next day was almost unendurable. She sat hour after hour, unable to settle to any occupation, and listening to every footstep which approached the house. At length, at about three o'clock, there was a loud double knock at the hall-door. She flew to the window. She could just see the back of a man who appeared to be a stranger to her. A minute or two later, Susan came hurrying in.

"Of all people in the world, my lady, Mr. Bulfinch," she exclaimed.

"Mr. Bulfinch!" echoed Lady Deverell, in utter amazement. "What business has he here? What can he want with me?"

"Don't know, my lady, but he said he wished to see you very particularly."

"I cannot possibly see him, Susan," Lady Deverell exclaimed. Then she reflected a moment. What mysterious fate had brought this man to the house just at the time Mr. Poingdestre was so anxious to encounter him? Was it possible he had obtained any hint of what had transpired, and wished to make restitution in the hope of evading the penalty of his guilt? Or was his visit some new and gratuitous insult to her? She could not understand it. The idea of seeing him was beyond everything distasteful, and yet might it not be productive of some event which would bring about the desired end in a more expeditious manner even than she had ventured to hope that morning? How she longed for her kind friends to help her in this emergency! In any case, she felt it better to battle with her hatred of the man and grant him an interview. She might at least obtain from him some information as to his movements which would prove useful to Mr. Poingdestre, and she felt it would be unwise to send him away. Meanwhile, she would dispatch a messenger to her friends to inform them of his arrival. She hastened to the writing-table, and wrote as follows:

"DEAR MR. POINGDESTRE,

"Mr. Bulfinch *is here*. Pray come as soon as possible.

"KATE DEVERELL."

Handing this to the servant, she instructed him to send a man with it in the first cab that could be found. Then she sent a message to Mr. Bulfinch to say she was not prepared to see him at once; but that if he would wait she would do so as soon as she conveniently could. It was a pardonable ruse to gain time, so that there might be a chance of Poingdestre's arrival before the lawyer left the house. At the end of half an hour, however, a message came from Mr. Bulfinch to say that time was of importance to him, and that he would call again if Lady Deverell was still unable to see him. She felt that it would be running a risk to keep him waiting longer. The thought of the interview became more and more loathsome to her as it drew near, but she nerved herself to the task, and requested that he might be shown up. As his voice and hated step—distinguished as of old by the obtrusively creaking boots—were heard on the stairs, the blood tingled in her veins. It was with extreme difficulty she could control herself so as to speak calmly. She was standing by the table at which she had been writing, as Bulfinch entered the room. She remained standing, and regarded him with a contempt she did not care to conceal. It was so evident that even Bulfinch, who had lost none of his old exasperating assurance, was somewhat disturbed, and stood near the door, uncertain what course to pursue.

"May I ask what is the object of your visit?" she said.

"Pardon me, Lady Deverell; my visit cannot be explained in a few words. I have much to say to you."

"I should be wanting in candor if I did not tell you at once that this interview is distasteful to me. May I request you to explain its object as briefly as possible?"

All question of expediency vanished before her intense hatred of the man. Even if his departure entailed the loss of all future chance of bringing him to justice, she could not bring herself to prolong the interview by any action of her own. To be freed from his presence at the earliest possible moment was now her one desire, whatever the consequences might be.

"Certainly, my dear lady, certainly. I can easily understand that my presence is distasteful to you,—most distasteful. Still, my motive is as pure as the sun at noonday, and that, at least, should insure me a patient hearing. May I venture to take a chair, and request you to be seated yourself?"

She would probably escape the sooner by conceding this point. She took the nearest chair to where she was standing. Mr. Bulfinch sank easily into the most comfortable one on his side of the room. Even he was sufficiently discreet to know that his cause would be injured by proximity. He went on:

"The force of circumstances—circumstances over which I had no control—has most unfortunately caused our relations to each other to be antagonistic. I will at once concede that point. My position as the possessor of the estates over which, as the guardian of your dear child, you would now have control, but for a series of most unfortunate circumstances, must of course render my presence obnoxious to you. This is my misfortune, not my fault, believe me, my dear lady."

There was a movement of impatience in his listener.

"Will you oblige me by curtailing these platitudes, and simply state your business?" she said.

"I am coming to that,—I am coming to that immediately. My business, I am bound to say, is of an extremely delicate nature, and requires explanation,—leading up to, in fact,—lest it should take you by surprise."

"I am accustomed to surprises, and can dispense with any preparation for what you have to say," she answered, quickly.

"No doubt, no doubt. Your strength of mind under peculiarly trying circumstances has impressed me much, on more than one occasion. May I venture to say, it is another noble trait added to the many I had previously observed in your character?"

His words came upon her like some sickening odor. If she had been a man she felt she must have struck him. He seemed to read her feelings, for he hurried on:

"The subject I wish to refer to touches the future welfare of your dear child."

Astonishment for a moment conquered her repugnance.

"Of my child?" she echoed. "In what way can you possibly influence the future of my child?"

The lawyer saw he had scored a point. "I will explain," he said, hastening to follow up his advantage. "By a series of misfortunes, as I before remarked, your son has been deprived of his estates. It is hard that these misfortunes—induced mainly by his father—should be visited on so young and innocent a head. It is quite possible, my dear lady, that, under certain conditions, your child may yet inherit the patrimony which is justly his due."

"What can you possibly mean?"

She was leaning forward eagerly now. The one thought of her child's welfare was uppermost. She listened for each word that fell from the lips of the man she loathed. He continued:

"I surprise you,—naturally. It would be absurd for me to ignore the fact that you do not give me credit for a single good feeling. Nevertheless, it is my wish—my earnest, heart-felt wish—that all ill feeling between us should be laid aside, and that your child should eventually possess all he has lost,—under certain conditions."

It was evident to her now that he must have heard some rumors of Keith's confession, and wished to save himself by

a sudden compromise. The witness Mrs. Poingdestre had mentioned had not yet arrived. Even when he did there *might* be a miscarriage of justice. It was as well in the interest of her child to listen to what this man had to propose.

"Will you be so good as to state those conditions?" she said.

"I will, without further preamble,—instigated as I am by my admiration of your character. I am unmarried. At my death the property would pass to a distant cousin, in whom I have no possible interest. I am willing—nay, anxious—that it should pass instead to its legitimate owner, your son."

"And the condition is——?"

"That you will condescend to make me the happiest of men, by becoming my wife!"

Lady Deverell started from her chair. Astopishment and indignation for a moment held her dumb.

Bulfinch mistook her silence. He went on: "You are surprised, my dear lady. I don't wonder. The possessor of Norton Towers, and the owner of half a million, might well look for an alliance among the noblest in the land. This is not my ambition. I prefer rather to choose a wife where I can give my heart; and I can assure you no pains shall be spared to make your life as happy——"

His words were suddenly arrested by a look of withering scorn in his listener's face.

"How dare you insult me with this vile proposition?" she cried.

She drew herself up to her full height, her whole frame quivering with unrestrained anger, and her eyes flashing with a scorn such as even Bulfinch had never witnessed. He was astounded. It was not conceivable to him that so advantageous an offer to one in Lady Deverell's condition should be rejected. He thought she mistook his intentions.

"What can you mean?" he said. "Surely you mistake me?"

"I did, indeed, mistake you, in supposing for one moment that you intended to make honorable restitution to my child of the estates of which his father was robbed. I have no words to express the loathing I feel for the proposition you have dared to make. I request you to leave my house at once."

The lingering smile vanished from the lawyer's face as these words fell upon his ear. He stepped back a pace or two. A malignant scowl gathered on his brow, but he restrained himself as he answered,—

"Gently, madam, gently. These are strong words, and there is a limit even to *my* endurance. I have yet to learn that there is anything either in the person or position of John Bulfinch to call for this unseemly indignation at a simple proposal of marriage."

She could scarcely trust herself to answer. "Once more I say, will you leave the house before I summon the servants?" She passed quickly to the fireplace and laid her trembling hand upon the bell.

"Stay!" cried Bulfinch, in a tone that arrested her hand. "Before you ring that bell let me advise you for your own sake to hear what I have to say. I intended to do you a great service. It is in my power to do you a great injury; and by Jove, madam, Bulfinch is not a man to be trifled with!"

The unparalleled injuries he had inflicted on her in times gone by, his unscrupulous nature, and the villainy which now showed itself in every line of his face, cowed her, in spite of the news she had heard that morning. What if her husband had not been saved, after all? What if any mishap should befall the witness who was on his way home with the papers necessary to convict this man? She knew that he would leave no stone unturned to gain his end. She knew full well of what vile plots he was capable. She could not shake off a feeling of dread,—though she strove hard to conceal it.

"You cannot do me a greater injury than you have done already," she exclaimed.

"Let me recommend you not to put me to the test," he retorted, quickly. "You have lost your position, your estates, your husband. Take care you don't lose the small fortune you have lately inherited."

She drew a breath of relief. "Thank heaven, that is beyond your power!" she exclaimed.

"Is it?" replied Bulfinch, with a diabolical cunning in his look and voice. "Don't be too sure even of that. In the present day money can do everything, and my resources are, practically, unlimited. Listen to me."

He placed his dirty foot upon a chair, and leaned his elbow on the raised knee, looking at her fixedly as he spoke, and beating the palm of his left hand with the clenched fist of the other, as if checking off the sentences one by one.

"The enterprise in which the greater part of your money is embarked is in my power. You may perhaps have heard of what is called 'floating' a company. It is my happy privilege to be able to float anything. I 'floated' this one, taking care to keep so much of it in my own hands that I could make or mar it at will. Your trustees were foolish enough to be gulled by the splendid prospects paraded before the dazzled eyes of the too confiding public. At a sign from me the whole magnificent fabric crumbles to dust. Without my support, but one result is possible in the present state of the money market, — utter collapse. I see you are moved. May I hope that this intelligence will induce you to reconsider your resolve?"

It was a vile lie, after all. Bulfinch knew he had threatened more than he could accomplish, but the ruse was worth a trial, and at the moment Lady Deverell could not control a sensation of deadly fear. It seemed impossible to escape the diabolical schemes of this unscrupulous scoundrel. It was not for herself she feared, but for her child.



"Come, now! Let me beg of you to reconsider the matter," Bulfinch repeated, seeing that she did not answer. "Even now I will pardon your hard words if you will give your consent to my proposal."

Her words came at last. "Never!" she cried, with a renewed flush of anger mounting to her cheek and forehead. "Your miserable attempt to coerce me by this atrocious scheme, for this, I believe, was your motive, fills me with scorn and contempt. Your vile proposition is an offense to me,—an insult to one who, I have reason to believe, is still alive."

For an instant Bulfinch looked astounded. Then his features relaxed, and he broke into a chuckling laugh.

"Ah! do not delude yourself with that idea. The circumstances of his death are too well corroborated to leave any doubt about it."

"I choose to think otherwise," she replied. "Even if it were not so, I have another protector now, as you know. But enough of this! Rather than listen to your proposal, I would beg my bread from door to door. I would *starve* sooner than touch your hand."

Bulfinch advanced to the table, beside which she stood. For a moment he looked as if he would have struck her to the ground; but his rage found vent in speech.

"Fine words for one who drove her husband to exile and death by a deed worthy of a common street-walker!"

She recoiled before these terrible words, and pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples. Recovering herself, she flashed upon her cowardly assailant a look of concentrated scorn, and, with a sudden movement, pressed her hand upon the bell.

Bulfinch saw that the game was up. He crossed at once to the door, opened it, then turned, with indescribable malice in his face. Once more he spoke.

"You shall be obeyed, madam, but I warn you of the fate in store for you. You will not accept the position I offer. You will be *compelled* to accept the beggary your own folly has brought upon you. I am a determined man. I will not be turned from my purpose, not even if Sir Arthur himself rose from the dead to confront me."

He turned to go, but the next moment he uttered a cry like the yelp of a beaten cur, and slunk backward across the room.

Sir Arthur Deverell, with Val Poingdestre and a stranger, stood before him in the doorway!

---

## CHAPTER L.

### RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

LADY DEVERELL uttered no sound. She stood gazing with wide wonder-stricken eyes, her lips moving inarticulately, her arms outstretched like one in whom all powers of volition are suddenly arrested by paralysis.

Deverell sprang to her side and put his strong arms about her, not deigning to notice the cowering wretch who had so insulted her, and who now stood slinking behind him.

For more than a minute the wife lay motionless on the husband's breast. Closer and closer she clung to him, with low hysterical sobs breaking from her almost unconsciously. Once or twice she essayed to speak, but her quivering lips refused to shape the words.

He put back her hair from her forehead softly, with a touch as tender as a woman's.

"Do not speak, darling," he said: "this has come upon you too suddenly."

She clung still closer to him. Her storm-tossed heart had found a haven at last. All the agony of grief, the doubts, the fears, the "anguish of patience," were at an end. Rest, rest and peace were found once more. She feared to lift her head, lest it should all vanish, and the hideous past come back to her,—all the more black and dreadful for this delicious dream.

Val stepped across the room, followed by the stranger,—a short, thick-set man, with bushy whiskers and a close-cropped head.

"I told you, Mr. Bulfinch, that you would get into a police-court soon enough in the natural course of things. It seems I was a true prophet," said Val.

Bulfinch was beginning to slink towards the door.

"I don't understand you. Let me pass," he said.

Val placed himself in his way.

"Not yet," he replied. "My friend, Sir Arthur, here, has left it for me to explain. I presume you were tolerably well acquainted with Percival Keith's signature: is that anything like it?"

He drew a paper from his pocket and presented it to the lawyer. Bulfinch was livid by this time. His flabby cheeks looked flabbier than ever, robbed of their rubicund glow, but he said not a word.

"Exactly," continued Val. "I see you don't dispute it. That signature was attached to a death-bed confession. Death-bed confessions are not, as a rule, pleasant things. Now do you understand me?"

"I do not. Let me pass, I say."

Val pointed to the stranger. "I fancy this gentleman may offer some objection," he said, quietly.

He stood on one side, and the next moment the stranger's hand was on the lawyer's shoulder.

"Damnation! what does this mean?" cried Bulfinch, wrenching himself free.

"It means, Mr. Bulfinch, that you're wanted for a matter of forgery and one or two other things," said the stranger. "It's all right. You'd better come quietly. There's your own brougham at the door: you can drive up in that, if you like,—along with *me*."

"It's a vile conspiracy," almost screamed Bulfinch. "I'll not submit to it."

"No, it isn't. You may as well come at once," said the officer. "I've help below. It's useless for you to resist."

Bulfinch had sense enough left to see the force of the remark,—though he literally ground his teeth with rage.

With irritating calmness, Val went on:

"Mr. Bulfinch, if ever you get your ticket of leave, let me recommend you to give up your crooked ways and endeavor to go straight."

The officer cut short the savage retort which rose to the lawyer's lips, by seizing him by the arm and leading him from the room. Val threw himself into an arm-chair.

"Thank God, we've tripped up that scoundrel at last!" he cried. "He's been like a fit of indigestion to me for the last two years."

Lady Deverell still lay reclining on her husband's breast. She looked up into his face with her clear, loving eyes.

"Are you really come back to me?" she said, at length, in a low, happy voice.

"Yes, darling," he answered, bending down closely over her,—“come back to ask your forgiveness for the cruel wrong I have done you; never to leave you again, but to shield you, as a husband should, from evil tongues and evil men, for evermore.”

"Bless you for those dear words!" she answered, laying her cheek closely against his breast.

Val turned to his wife. "Don't you think we had better take a turn in the garden?" he said, in an under-tone. "The circumstances are somewhat embarrassing."

Mrs. Poingdestre nodded an assent, and rose to go. Sir Arthur divined their intention, and looked up.

"You won't run away from us?" he said. "We'll let you go for a quarter of an hour,—not longer."

As he spoke, his eyes fell on the bassinette, which stood by the fire. He stared at it in amazement.

"What in the world is that?" he demanded.

Val could not restrain a laugh, as he marked his friend's puzzled look.

"The residence of my godson, Arthur Deverell, junior," he took upon himself to answer.

Deverell looked in his wife's face. "Is this really true?" he said.

The answer was in her happy eyes, and he went on:

"That is, indeed, an unlooked-for happiness, my darling."

"My godson is at present taking his walks abroad," continued Val. "An intelligent youth, I assure you, who already develops considerable taste in the matter of bricks and Noah's Arks. Come, my dear; we will send him in."

They left the room. Lady Deverell turned to her husband with brimming eyes.

"Oh, Arty, I am so overwhelmed with happiness I don't know what to do or say! I only want to sit still and look at you and try to take in the fact that you are really come back to me. Was that story they told me of the way you were saved, true?"

"Yes."

"And of their friend's meeting with that man Keith in Australia?"

"Yes, but the friend they spoke of was myself. They dared not tell you this, fearing the consequences if the news

came upon you too suddenly. But Poingdestre tells me you have some wonderful news for me."

"Has he not told you?"

"No. He said he should leave that to you. I cannot conceive what he refers to."

She drew a little apart from him. "Arty, what should you say if I told you that I was born a lady, and that I am not the daughter of James Price? Should you love me less?"

He drew her fondly towards him. "I should not love you less—or more; but I should say you were telling me a very great fib."

"But it is true, nevertheless," she cried, "and, what is far better, dear old Sir John Bolt is my grandfather."

Deverell recoiled a little.

"Katie, have you taken leave of your senses?" he cried.

"No; I never more thoroughly enjoyed the possession of them. It is perfectly true. I will tell you all about it another time. It came out in the most wonderful way, only a few weeks ago. Dear Sir John is in London. Oh, what intense happiness it will be for us to be together again!"

"This is indeed wonderful," Sir Arthur said, still scarcely able to take it all in. "I'm afraid, Katie," he added, with a smile, "that this upsets your theory of the incapability of well-born women to perform heroic deeds: Sir John comes of a good old stock."

"How wonderful it seems!" she answered. "But how came you to be traveling in Australia at all?"

"The ship which saved me from the island—that island which I shall bless for evermore, for it was the means of my conversion, dear—landed me in Australia. I was obliged to wait there some days for a homeward-bound ship. To beguile the time, for I was terribly impatient to get away, I visited the interior, and came upon Keith in the extraordinary manner you have heard."

He paused a moment, and then, in a subdued tone, went on:

"Katie, there is a wonderful Providence in all this. If you had not sat for that picture, I should never have recovered my possessions, and you would in all probability never have known the secret of your birth. But for that act, I should not have gone abroad, and Keith would have died unrecognized in the bush. The very deed for which I condemned you so cruelly has been the means of convicting a villain and restoring us to the dear old home."

"And you have quite forgiven me?" she asked, looking into his face with all the confiding love of old.

"Forgiven you! Let me ask rather if *you* have forgiven *me*? Ah, Katie, the pride of the Deverells seemed to dwindle to a very small thing on that desert island of the Indian sea, with the great sea moaning everlastingly around, and the cold pitiless stars gazing down upon a miserable wretch sleeping in the cleft of a rock and supping on a chance shell-fish. It is little wonder if the scales fell from my eyes, and I learned to contrast your noble self-sacrifice with my own miserable pride. How I longed for you I can never describe. Sometimes I dreamed that you were by my side, with your soft arms about me, and your sweet lips pressed to mine; and when I awoke from those dreams to the terrible reality of my life, it was only through the mercy of heaven that my senses did not give way."

Still more closely she nestled into his breast, as if to console him for the sufferings he had undergone. He went on:

"Long before I was rescued, Katie, my heart throbbed with penitence and grief,—a penitence not born of the hope of heaven's mercy in bringing me release, for I had given up all hope, but a penitence which sprang from the deep conviction of my guilt,—for which I will now, at least, *try* to make amends."

"Does not this meeting make amends for all?"

"Not for all. I feel that a life's devotion cannot do that. The very picture which I once loathed, when it passes from the hands of that villain into mine, shall be enshrined among my dearest possessions. Future eyes shall dwell upon it as the picture of a woman greater than Godiva of old. She only saved the people from a tax, but this one's sacrifice saved a human soul."

THE END.



# POPULAR BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

## J. B. LIPPINCOTT & Co.,

715 AND 717 MARKET ST., PHILA.

*Will be sent to any address, postpaid, upon receipt of the price.*

### *The Princess and the Goblin. A Fairy Story. By*

GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D., author of "Alec Forbes,"

"Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood," etc., Editor of "Good Words for the Young." With Thirty Illustrations. 16mo.

Extra cloth, gilt. \$1.50.

"George Macdonald deserves all that can be said in his praise for the unequalled originality and beauty of his writings for youth. In the present volume he has surpassed himself. Rarely have we seen the pure interest of the fairy tale so well turned to moral purposes."—*Philadelphia Age*.

"This is one of the most attractive books for the young published this

season, in respect both to contents and appearance. It is fascinating in its interest."

"The story before us is an exquisite allegory, as delicately and beautifully written as if it were a lyric, instead of a prose, poem. Like everything else of Macdonald's, it is pure and sweet."—*Pittsburgh Gazette*.

### *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood. By George Mac-*

donald, LL.D., author of "Robert Falconer," etc. With numerous Illustrations. 16mo. Fine cloth. \$1.50.

"If we only could have such juvenile books! We mean such as *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood*, by George Macdonald. To light on such a book, full of 'sweetness and light,' full of boy-life and true goodness, is a discovery. There is adventure here. But such adventure! Never have we seen the ethics of a boy's life, the seed-morals that are sure to grow into the after-life, so well treated. If you have

children, *Ranald Bannerman* is good company for them; and if we had the power to put him where he deserves to be, *Ranald Bannerman* should stand upon every Sunday-school library-shelf."—*New York Independent*.

"Mr. Macdonald writes of youthful experiences in a way unequalled by any other author of the day, and this volume is in his best style."—*Boston Post*.

### *How Nelly Found the Fairies. A Grandmother's*

Christmas Story. 16mo. Extra cloth. \$1.

"How Nelly Found the Fairies, a Grandmother's Story," is one of many attractive books for young people lately published by J. B. Lippincott & Co. It is very unlike the usual run of books

of this class, and the fairy whom the heroine found, instead of performing wondrous things, is a tender and wise monitor whose teaching improves the mind."—*Philadelphia Press*.

*Blanche Gulroy. A Girl's Story. A Novel. By*

MARGARET HOSMER, author of "The Morrisons," "Ten Years of a Lifetime," etc. 12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"Its tone is excellent."—*Philadelphia Age*.

"It is a love-story of the intense and tragical sort, with a deep plot and any amount of stirring incident. The characters are drawn with much distinctness and vigor, and the story sweeps on to its end amid a rushing

whirl of cross-purposes with deceiving fascination. It must be said, too, that the secret of the interest is in the characters and their destinies, since the language of the narrative is neither florid nor exaggerated."—*Boston Advertiser*.

*The Holcombes. A Story of Virginia Home-Life.*

By MARY FUCKER MAGILL. 12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"The subject is a charming one."—*Winchester Times*.

"This book is written from an elevated point of view, both as to its society and scenery. . . . We find

it an interesting story. . . . The tone of this work is admirable, and we shall be glad to hear again from the author."—*Philadelphia Age*.

*Left to Herself. A Novel. By Fennie Woodville.*

12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"Such a spicy mixture of ingredients as this book contains cannot fail to make an exciting story; and as the plot is well conceived, the characters well drawn and the interest well sustained to the end, without degenerating into the melo-dramatic, we are disposed to recommend to others a book which we ourselves have found captivating enough to burn the midnight gas over."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

"Amid the flood of mediocrity and trash that is poured upon the public in the shape of novels, it is the pleasant duty of the critic to discern real merit, and this we recognize in 'Left to Herself.'"—*The Philadelphia Age*.

"We predict for it a large sale in this section, and anticipate that it will be favorably received by the reading public of the whole country."—*Lyndburg Republican*.

*Was She Engaged? A Novel. By "Jonquil."*

12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"A pleasant, bright and sparkling story."—*Baltimore Gazette*.

"This entertaining love story comes to us fresh from the pen and the press, in clear, readable type that would make a far less enticing work pleasurable. We feel assured that those who are fond of the purely emotional in character or literature will find ample entertainment from its pages. The story is written in the first person, and is a narrative vastly superior to a great mass of so-called novels. There is not a particle of rant from cover to cover.

No passion is 'torn to tatters.' No impossible incidents are introduced, and yet the interest is maintained throughout. The pure, sweet character of Lucy, so well displayed against the more energetic but less poetical Rosamond; the sunlight and shadow of these two, enhanced by the dark and designing character of Sarah, combine to produce prominent impressions."—*Philadelphia Press*.

"Every one seems to be going for 'Was She Engaged.'"—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

*Lost and Saved. A Novel. By Hon. Mrs. Norton.*

New Edition. 12mo. Cloth. \$1.25.

"Remarkably well written; . . . very readable."—*Philadelphia Press*.

"The best novel that Mrs. Norton has written."—*Baltimore Gazette*.

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

*Eleonore. A Romance. After the German of E*

VON ROTHENFELS, author of "On the Vistula," "Heath-flower," etc. By FRANCES ELIZABETH BENNETT, translator of "Lowly Ways." 12mo. Fine cloth. Ornamented. \$1.50.

"A vivid reproduction of German life and character."—*Boston Globe*.

"A bright, readable novel."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

"The plot is developed with remarkable skill."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

*Tom Pippin's Wedding. A Novel. By the Au*

thor of "The Fight at Dame Europa's School." 16mo.

Extra cloth. \$1.25. Paper cover. 75 cents.

"We must confess that its perusal has caused us more genuine amusement than we have derived from any fiction, not professedly comic, for many a long day. . . . Without doubt this is, if not the most remarkable, cer-

tainly the most original, novel of the day."—*London Bookeller*.

"It is fresh in characterization, and is as instructive as it is entertaining."—*Boston Evening Traveller*.

*Irene. A Tale of Southern Life. Illustrated; and*

HATHAWAY STRANGE. 8vo. Paper cover. 35 cents.

"They are both cleverly written."—*New Orleans Times*.

"These stories are pleasantly writ-

ten. They are lively, gossippy and genial."—*Baltimore Gazette*.

*Wearithorne; or, In the Light of To-Day. A*

Novel. By "FADETTE," author of "Ingemisco" and

"Randolph Honor." 12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"Written with exceptional dramatic power and terseness, and with strong powers of personation."—*Philadelphia North American*.

"It is written with vigor, and the characters are sketched with a marked individuality."—*Literary Gazette*.

"The style is clever and terse, the characters are boldly etched, and with strong individualities."—*New Orleans Times*.

"Simply and tenderly written."—*Washington Chronicle*.

*Steps Upward. A Temperance Tale. By Mrs.*

F. D. GAGE, author of "Elsie Magoon," etc. 12mo. Extra

cloth. \$1.50.

"'Steps Upward,' by Mrs. Frances Dana Gage, is a temperance story of more than ordinary interest. Diana Dinmont, the heroine, is an earnest, womanly character, and in her own upward progress helps many another

to a better life."—*New York Independent*.

"We are sure no reader can but enjoy and profit by it."—*New York Evening Mail*.

*Minna Montè. A Novel. By "Stella." 12mo.*

\$1.25.

"A domestic story possessing great spirit and many other attractive features."—*St. Louis Republican*.

"We have in this little volume an agreeable story, pleasantly told."—*Pittsburgh Gazette*.

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

**"It is the Fashion." A Novel. From the German**  
of ADELHEID VON AUER. By the translator of "Over Yonder," "Magdalena," "The Old Countess," etc. 12mo.  
Fine cloth. \$1.50.

"It is one of the most charming books of the times, and is admirable for its practical, wise and beautiful morality. A more natural and graceful work of its kind we never before read."—*Richmond Dispatch*.

"This is a charming novel; to be recommended not only for the interest of the story, but for the fine healthy tone that pervades it. . . . This work has not the excessive elaboration of

many German novels, which make them rather tedious for American readers, but is fresh, sprightly and full of common sense applied to the business of actual life."—*Philadelphia Age*.

"It is a most excellent book, abounding in pure sentiment and beautiful thought, and written in a style at once lucid, graceful and epigrammatic."—*New York Evening Mail*.

**Dead Men's Shoes. A Novel. By F. R. Hadermann,** author of "Forgiven at Last." 12mo. Fine cloth.  
\$2.

"One of the best novels of the season."—*Philadelphia Press*.

"One of the best novels descriptive of life at the South that has yet been

published. The plot is well contrived, the characters well contrasted and the dialogue crisp and natural."—*Baltimore Gazette*.

**Israel Mort, Overman. A Story of the Mine. By**  
JOHN SAUNDERS, author of "Abel Drake's Wife." Illustrated. 16mo. Fine cloth. \$1.25.

"Intensely dramatic. . . . Some of the characters are exquisitely drawn, and show the hand of a master."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

"The book takes a strong hold on the reader's attention from the first, and the interest does not flag for a moment."—*Boston Globe*.

"The denouement, moral and artistic, is very fine."—*New York Evening Mail*.

"It treats of a variety of circumstances and characters almost new to the realm of fiction, and has a peculiar interest on this account."—*Boston Advertiser*.

**In the Rapids. A Romance. By Gerald Hart.**  
12mo. Toned paper. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"Full of tragic interest."—*Cincinnati Gazette*.

"It is, on the whole, remarkably well told, and is particularly notable for its resemblance to those older and, in some respects, better models of com-

position in which the dialogue is subordinated to the narrative, and the effects are wrought out by the analytical powers of the writer."—*Baltimore Gazette*.

**The Parasite; or, How to Make One's Fortune.**  
A Comedy in Five Acts. After the French of Picard  
12mo. Paper cover. 75 cents.

A pleasant, sprightly comedy, unexceptionable in its moral and chaste in its language. As our amateur actors are always in pursuit of plays of this

character, we should suppose they would find this a valuable addition to their stock."—*Philadelphia Age*.

*Seed-Time and Harvest; or, During my Apprenticeship.* From the Platt-Deutsch of Fritz Reuter. 8vo. Paper cover. \$1 Extra cloth. \$1.50.

No German author of the present time is more popular in his own country than REUTER. He is pronounced by a competent German critic to be deservedly "the most popular German writer of the last half century."

REUTER is especially noted as the *rare humorist, the genuine poet and the fascinating delineator* of the lives of his Platt-Deutsch neighbors, and as such is probably more beloved than any other German author of the day. The tale in question is one of his best and most important works, giving its readers, with its other entertainment and profit, a charming acquaintance with the quaint, interesting Platt-Deutsch people.

"Fritz Reuter is one of the most

popular writers in Germany. . . . The charm of his stories lies in their simplicity and exquisite truth to Nature. He has 'the loving heart' which Carlyle tells us is the secret of writing; and Reuter is not graphic merely, he is photographic. His characters impress one so forcibly with their reality that one need not to be told they are portraits from life. Even the villains must have been old acquaintances. . . . It ('During my Apprenticeship') is one of the best of Reuter's stories, exhibiting his turn for the pathetic as well as for the humorous."—*New York Evening Post*.

"It has a freshness and novelty that are rare in these times."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

*The Sylvestres; or, The Outcasts. A Novel.* By M. DE BETHAM-EDWARDS, author of "Kitty," "Dr. Jacob," etc. Illustrated. 8vo. Paper. 75 cents. Extra cloth. \$1.25.

"It is an exceptionally vigorous and healthy as well as happy tale."—*Philadelphia North American*.

"It is one of the author's best."—*New York Home Journal*.

"A capital novel."—*Pittsburg Gazette*.

"The story is well constructed, and the descriptive passages with which the work abounds are worthy of the highest praise. The sketches of scenery are painted with the touch of an artist."—*Philadelphia & Co. Bulletin*.

*Myself. A Romance of New England Life.* 12mo. Extra cloth. \$2.

"This is really a capital story. The characters are drawn with a free and sharp pen, the style is fresh and lively

and the plot quite unhackneyed."—*Boston Courier*.

*How will it End? A Romance.* By F. C. Heywood, author of "Herodias," "Antonius," etc. 12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"It is a fascinating novel, which most exert a good influence, and on"

that should be widely read."—*Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*.

*Doings in Maryland; or, Matilda Douglas* "TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION." 12mo. Extra cloth \$1.75.

It is a very perfect story—simple, noble and without that straining for literary effect which constitutes the

best attainable definition of the sensational."—*New York Home Journal*

PUBLICATIONS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

*Dorothy Fox. A novel. By Louisa Parr, author*  
of "How it all Happened," etc. With numerous Illustrations. 8vo. Paper cover. 75 cents. Extra cloth. \$1.25.

"The Quaker character, though its quaintness and simplicity may seem easy enough to catch, requires a delicate workman to do it justice. Such an artist is the author of 'Dorothy Fox,' and we must thank her for a charming novel. The story is dramatically interesting, and the characters are drawn with a firm and graceful hand. The style is fresh and natural, vigorous without vulgarity, simple without mawkishness. Dorothy herself is represented as charming all

hearts, and she will charm all readers. . . We wish 'Dorothy Fox' many editions."—*London Times*.

"One of the best novels of the season."—*Philadelphia Press*.

"The characters are brought out in life-like style, and cannot fail to attract the closest attention."—*Pittsburg Gazette*.

"It is admirably told, and will establish the reputation of the author among novelists."—*Albany Argus*.

*How it all Happened. By Louisa Parr, author of*

"Dorothy Fox," etc. 12mo. Paper cover. 25 cents.

"It is not often that one finds so much pleasure in reading a love story, charmingly told in a few pages."—*Charleston Courier*.

"Is a well-written little love story,

in which a great deal is said in a very few words."—*Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*.

"A remarkably clever story."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

*John Thompson, Blockhead, and Companion Portraits. By LOUISA PARR, author of "Dorothy Fox."*

12mo. With Frontispiece. Extra cloth. \$1.75.

"Extremely well-told stories, interesting in characters and incidents, and pure and wholesome in sentiment."—*Boston Watchman and Reflector*.

"These are racy sketches, and belong to that delightful class in which the end comes before the reader is ready for it.

"The style throughout is very sim-

ple and fresh, abounding in strong, vivid, idiomatic English."—*Horn Journal*.

"They are quite brilliant narrative sketches, worthy of the reputation established by the writer."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*.

"Very presentable, very readable."—*New York Times*.

*The Quiet Miss Godolphin, by Ruth Garrett; and*

A CHANCE CHILD, by EDWARD GARRETT, joint authors of "Occupations of a Retired Life" and "White as Snow."

With Six Illustrations by Townley Green. 16mo. Cloth 75 cents. Paper cover. 50 cents.

"These stories are characterized by great strength and beauty of thought, with a singularly attractive style. Their

influence will not fail to improve and delight."—*Philadelphia Age*.

*St. Cecilia. A Modern Tale from Real Life.*

PART I.—ADVERSITY. 12mo. Extra cloth. \$1.50.

"It is carefully and beautifully written."—*Washington Chronicle*.

"A tale that we can cheerfully re-

commend as fresh, entertaining and well written."—*Louisville Courier Journal*.

14

71 ✓













